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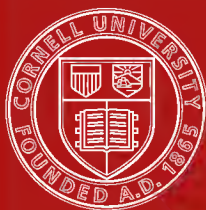
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ETHICA:

OR

CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN, MANNERS,

AND BOOKS.

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OR,

CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN, MANNERS,
AND BOOKS.

BY

ARTHUR LLOYD WINDSOR.

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P R E F A C E .

THE literary life of the past two centuries, like the social, has a large element of anecdote in it, by the contemplation of which alone it can be fully realized. Stray waifs—straws in the intellectual atmosphere—not infrequently afford material for the most efficacious mental characterization, where the formal facts of biography proper, though at first sight more imposing, give a less authentic portraiture. To arrest these motes of intelligence, now fast eluding the ken of the present generation, and to winnow them on the threshing-floor of biological criticism, is my object. The title of the Work sufficiently interprets its aim; but it is fair to add, that the titles attached to the several chapters give a very far from adequate idea of their actual contents.

It should be stated that Chapters I., IV., and VII., are reprinted, with considerable additions, from the "British Quarterly Review;" to whose editor the author desires to make his cordial acknowledgment.

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ETHICA.

CHAPTER I.

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THE literary relation between France and England has undergone a complete change since the day that Mauptuis pleaded the merits of Newton, or, still more recently, since the day that Dumont expounded the

oracles of Bentham. France holds no longer the position of moonshee or interpreter to England. The achievements of British genius are no longer conveyed to Europe in the language of Gaul. The monopoly of criticism, which rendered Paris the arbitress of European taste, has long since passed away, and English authors are far more disposed to look for a continental notoriety to the tribunals of Hamburg and Vienna. At the same time, a juster distribution of power has brought with it a juster application of it. English literature has gained in originality, as it has gained in independence ; while French literature has received in compensation a far more philosophic appreciation than could have been bestowed on it by the fine gentlemen and fine ladies who, more than a century ago, spent their time in imitating the models of *Voiture* and *Balzac*, and in labouring to prove *Boileau* a greater critic than *Horace*. It was not always so. Our relations with Germany are comparatively modern. *Lessing* and *Johnson* were contemporaries, yet, to all appearance, neither ever heard of the other. Our literary relations with France were established earlier. The mutual interchange of thought at the revival of philosophy in the two countries wonderfully and rapidly confirmed them. Thus it was written from Paris, in the year 1780, that "the English language and literature are so cultivated in France, and so eagerly learned, that the best authors of Great Britain are now reprinting in the metropolis. *Shakespeare*, *Addison*, *Pope*, *Johnson*, *Hume*, and *Robertson* are to be published here very soon."¹ It was complained that *Baskerville's* famous type, "bought for a trifle," was used to propagate the English tongue.

At present it is difficult to take up the list of publications for a single quarter without observing the striking

¹ *Nichol's "Anecdotes Lit."* vol. iii. p. 460.

intimacy into which mere intellectual connection has ripened. It must be owned, that on our side the law of reciprocity has not been well maintained. A stray Life, such as that of the late Mr. St. John's "Montaigne," or a not very original History, such as that of Mr. Crowe's, scarcely compensates for the generous labour which M. Thierry has bestowed on one epoch of our country, and M. Guizot on another. If we are the debtors, however, we are not without gratitude. The great principle of literary cosmopolitanism is recognized; literature, in fact, has triumphed over the narrow compasses of the political geographer. It has surmounted the artificial limits of mere fiscal horizons. And it is no poor consolation that amid the animosities of race and faction, a single bond of union yet remains among nations, not to be measured by lines of latitude and longitude. There is a certain class of authors, whose works are so completely the reflex of their lives, that they can only be studied or apprehended through the light cast upon them by their Lives. Of this species of quasi-autobiography, an example, though a mean one, will readily suggest itself in the title of Colley Cibber's "Apology." Montaigne's "Essays" afford a more perfect, because a more spiritual specimen.

Montaigne was born in his father's Château of Montaigne, in Perigord, in the summer of the year 1533—a date which his biographers do not forget to notice as corresponding to sixty years after the discovery of printing, forty after the discovery of America, and fifteen after Luther began to preach his Reforms. Of his father it is necessary to say a few words.

He seems to have been a man of more than ordinarily eccentric proportions. Early in life he had taken part in those fierce campaigns in which the hordes of the North, headed by leaders more skilful and more unscrupulous

than Alboin or Attila, once more swept across the sunny landscapes of the Alps to ravish the fair virginity of Italian civilization. He seems to have been present at that terrible siege, for which his son could find but a single parallel in the gloomy annals of war, when the citizens of Milan, driven to madness between the insults of Del Guasto and the perfidy of Bourbon, hurried from the precarious shelter of their grass-grown palaces to starve in wells or underground cellars, or to hide their outraged honour in the waters of the Olona.

The guerdons of military renown, distributed with such lavish hands around him, do not appear, however, to have aroused his chivalry. We soon after find him marrying and settling down at his ancestral estate, closing a career of continence so remarkable that his philosophic son has not forgotten to pay special tribute to it. But the old soldier had not yet relinquished his old habits. In all the scattered records that his son has left of his person and manners we readily trace the discipline of the camp. His face, bronzed by the suns of a southern sky, reflected in its gravity the modesty and precision of his demeanour. His person, retaining the scrupulousness and neatness of the parade-ground, was strong, well-knit, and well-proportioned. A horror of anything approaching to effeminacy was one of his peculiar characteristics. To supply the deficiencies of nature, whether of mind or body, by a course of artificial training, was one of his peculiar crotchets. There still remained in the son's lifetime canes full of lead, with which the sire was wont to exercise his arms for throwing the bar or the stone, and shoes with leaden heels to make him lighter for running or leaping. Miraculous stories of his powers of vaulting were current among the peasants of the Didoire, and, if we are to believe our only authority on the subject, many was the silken

courtier from Paris or Navarre that might have seen the old man, now past three-score, throwing himself at a bound, in his furred gown, into the saddle, or making the tour of the table on his thumbs, or springing up the stairs three or four at a time, with an agility unknown at the Louvre. A special subject of his ridicule, in spite of the stone, was physic, a contempt for which, inherited by his usually good-natured representative, has supplied him with an opportunity of bequeathing to posterity all the collected raillery of antiquity, from Herodotus and Plato to Dion and Stobæus. The household of the *Sieur Montaigne* did not, as a matter of course, escape the influence of this philosophic devotion to rules and regulations. The son, indeed, more than once pronounces his distaste for all domestic avocation. *Sallust* had declared it to be a servile employment. The younger *Pliny* had called it a base and abject care to be left to servants. Accordingly, he made it a point not to know how his steward disbursed his revenues, how much his lacquey gave for his stuffs, how his gardener ordered his vines, or his cook dressed his meats. Not so the father. Not a disbursement was made, however small, not an account rendered, that was not duly registered in the day-book, and handed to the special care of a bailiff. In addition to this, a journal was at hand, under the supervision of a secretary, dedicated to the reception of remarkable occurrences, the change of a groom, the death of a child, the marriage of a tenant, the visit of a critic from Holland, or a cavalier from Pau.

This was not all, however. His travels from Italy had brought him into contact with the little Court at Navarre, where the sister of Francis was wont to flee the irksome magnificence of St. Germain's to write novels in imitation of Boccaccio, or sonnets in the spirit of the "*Encomium Moræ*." The associations acquired at Nerac

were duly transplanted to the pumpkin-beds of Montaigne. Francis the First, among his other pretensions to grandeur, affected to rival the Cosmos in his patronage of letters, reared palaces for Primaticio and Il Rossi to adorn and decorate, established factories to rival the looms of Flanders, collected rare manuscripts, lavished his Tournois Sols on Greek savants and Venetian carvers, and spent the moments he could snatch from toying with the Duchess D'Estampes, or arranging the next pageant, in criticizing the designs of Finiguerra and Cellini, and contemplating the golden-haired madonnas of Da Vinci. Patronage had become accordingly a fashion, and the fashion set by the monarch had bitten his Perigordian subject. The house of the Bordeaux Prévôt soon became as notorious as Fontainebleau or Blois. Learned strangers from across the frontier readily took their host's queer theories and bad Spanish in return for a liberty of discussion denied them by the Sorbonne.

The result of all this was, a new idiosyncrasy developed itself. The veteran became a scholar, and the combination of the two characters in one immediately displayed itself in the training of his third son. As might have been expected, the exigencies of the boy's bodily development first came under notice. That he might not acquire the silken proportions of a Sir Paris was his chief object. He was accordingly, as he afterwards tells us, provided with god-parents of the meanest fortune, and taken from the cradle to be nursed at the breast of a common villager. Hardy as was his infantine training, it does not, however, seem to have produced the usual fruit. Years after, the essayist declared that he could not hear the rattle of an arquebus without starting, or see a chicken's neck pulled off without trouble, or endure the cry of a hare in his dog's teeth. The next consideration was the subject of education. It had formed one of the

principal topics of discussion at the château on more than one occasion. The inconvenience of the ordinary method was particularly insisted upon, and more than one commentator on Seneca and Aristotle had pronounced that the tedious course by which the languages were acquired was the sole cause the moderns could not arrive at the perfection of Athenians and Romans. It is probable, too, that he had read Rabelais, and been struck with the manner in which he makes the youthful Garagantua discuss the gossip of Pliny and Athenæus over his intervals of quince marmalade.

At any rate he hit upon a pleasant project for making his son a good classic. He had him, "before he could speak," delivered into the hands of a German tutor, imported expressly from his own country, at a very large salary. Two assistants were associated with him, whose conversations were only to be held in the dialect of Cicero and Terence. The very household were converted into scholars to forward the education of the youthful pedant. Not a man-servant nor a maid-servant in the domain that had not a scrap of dog-Latin ready to respond to the lisp of their young master. The whole village threatened to lose its native tongue, and when the essayist wrote, stable-boys and artisans still made use of terms that had less of Gascon than Roman in them.

To the acquisition of Greek the road was not so level. To puzzle the son's brains was not the father's design. A superstition in the matter of children's weakness of brain had already suggested to him the process of awakening the boy to the sound of the flute or the violin. It was with a similar precaution that he now devised the method of tossing out parisyllabics and imparisyllabics on the table "after the manner of those who play at chess." The conception, however, worthy as it was of the intuitive system of Pestalozzi himself, was an

acknowledged failure. "Of Greek," said Montaigne, in one of those singular fits of candour which have thrown a charm over his "Confessions" not surpassed by Rousseau's, "I had never anything but a smattering." Eventually the good man's eccentricity fairly succumbed to the force of common opinion, and at the age of six young Montaigne was despatched to study the humanities at the college of Guienne, at that time, according to the testimony of contemporary historians, the best and most flourishing in France. Here, however, his early training stood him in good stead. He was at once, on his entrance, preferred to the first form, and at thirteen he had gone through the academical course. The study of others was his amusement, and whilst other boys were reading the adventures of Amadis he would slip away from the tennis-court or the morris-dance to pore over the Transformations of Ovid, and enjoy the jokes of Plautus. His schoolfellows were amazed that a lad who could not speak Perigordian or French should act the Latin plays of the great Muretus with the spirit of a young Roscius, and make scholars like Buchanan look to their scholarship.

There was great danger of Montaigne's falling a victim to this youthful precocity. He was in a fair way of turning out a prodigy or a pedant. Happily for posterity his natural disposition completely neutralized the effect of his training. Had we not his own repeated assurance, it would be difficult to believe that he was as indolently inclined as he professed to be. He seems to have possessed very little of the materials for making a student. His wit, he complains, was slothful, going no faster than it was led; his understanding slow, his invention languishing. The least cloud arrested his progress. He never proposed to himself a riddle, be it never so easy, that he could find out. The smallest subtlety was

in danger of gravelling him. In games where quickness and originality are required, nothing but the commonest points could he venture to apprehend. Chess, he particularly tells us, he hated, as far too grave and serious a diversion for him. His application was singularly lethargic. If he turned over a book, he did not study it, and the books that he did turn over must be such as are pleasant and easy, and tickle his fancy. If one book did not please him, he took another, and even that he never meddled with, but at such times as he was weary of doing nothing. Anything that did not come to him as kindly as his "Decameron" or "Pantagruel," he fairly threw aside. To bite his nails about difficulties was no part of his philosophy. He never travelled, indeed, without books, but days and sometimes months passed over without his looking at them. His very Latin, which was to him as his mother tongue, he soon lost the use of speaking or writing, though so strong was the force of habit, that on one occasion, after a lapse of forty years, on seeing his father swoon, he involuntarily caught himself using Latin interjections. One of the circumstances which must undoubtedly have contributed to retard his reputation was his wonderful deficiency of memory. His defect in that faculty is, according to his own account, almost incredible. He would sometimes take up a book for new, which but a year before he had scribbled all over with notes and comments. His library was situated in a corner of his house. If he had anything in his head, he could not go across the basscourt that led to it without forgetting it. In speaking, the slightest digression from the subject left him bewildered. Verses that any of his playmates would have learnt in twenty minutes, took him three hours to acquire by heart. The very names of his servants were beyond his powers of retention. He could tell that they had three

syllables, that they sounded harsh, that they began or ended with such or such a letter, but that was all. He sometimes fancied that he should resemble that Messala of whom Pliny, in his "Natural History," has written, that he forgot his own name. It more than once befel him to forget the watchword he had a few hours previously given or received, and in spite of Cicero's experience, to put his purse in a lock-up, that afterwards escaped his recollection. Sometimes his memory played him tricks similar to those that are recorded of Wycherley, and he would either forget his own compositions and writings, or appropriate those of a brother author's for his own.

There was nothing, indeed, in his lazy, sluggish constitution, by which a careless observer could have intimated that the name of Montaigne was destined to form an epoch in the history of French literature and French philosophy. Liberty and laziness were, he says, his predominating qualities. Nothing was more distasteful to him than a matter of deliberation. He would rather have been cheated of four hundred crowns than be at the trouble of overlooking his accounts. The idea of consultation broke his rest. The very correction of his writings was a task beyond him. He could not bring himself even to revise his orthography or his punctuation. He had been solicited to write the history of his own times. Had he acceded to the request, it is probable that De Thou would never be taken from the book-shelf. But he refused. Not for the glory of Sallust would he submit himself to a labour of so much assiduity and perseverance. His bodily functions were apparently well attuned to this heavy disposition. His person was small, lower than the middle stature, though he does not forget to add that Aristotle had said little men are pretty, and that the Grand Duke Francis Maria de' Medici was his height. But though strong and well knit, he never

possessed the agility of his father. The most awkward page in his household could beat him in dancing, tennis, or wrestling. Swimming or fencing he never could learn. His hands were so clumsy that he could never so much as write so as to read what he had written.¹ He knew about as much of making a pen, or folding a letter, as a fishwife on the Petit Pont, and he could no more carve a capon than he could saddle a horse or lure a hawk. "Extremely idle, both by nature and art," are his own words, "I would as willingly lend a man my blood as my pains." His ignorance of common things was amazing. He had had his estate in his own hands since his predecessor had left him to succeed, yet he could not cast up the accounts of his rents, or reckon a counter, or even tell the names of the current coin. He had been bred up in the country amongst husbandmen, yet he did not know the difference between one grain and another, could scarcely distinguish between a cabbage and a lettuce, and had spent more than half his life in ignorance of the use of leaven in making bread, or fermentation in making wine. In compensation for all these disadvantages, he possessed one valuable qualification. Whatever he did put his mind to comprehend, he comprehended with a thoroughness that quicker intellects must have despaired of. It is possible, that had he been of a less indolent or a more studious disposition, his literary renown had never reached a wider sphere than the Scaligers or Buchanans, or he might have realized the anticipation which Goldsmith, in one of his letters to his kinsfolk, amusingly makes about himself, and be still mentioned with profound respect in a German comment or a Dutch dictionary. As it was, he protested that he only nibbled on the outward crust of learning ;

¹ La Bruyère ("Des Jugements," vol. ii. p. 84) relates a similar failing of the simple-hearted Corneille.

that he only knew that there is a science of law, a science of physics, and four parts in mathematics ; that he could never fathom the depths of Aristotle, and that the only books of solid learning he could ever seriously devote himself to were Plutarch and Seneca ; and the result is, he has bequeathed to the remotest posterity a work far surpassing in interest the works of either Plutarch or Seneca.

To return to his biography. Montaigne's life, before the production of his "Essays," had nothing of the easy chair of the philosopher about it. After quitting the college of Guienne he commenced the study of law, and at the age of twenty-one his biographers find him arrayed in the red robe of a councillor in the Parliament of Perigueux. The crisis in which he lived was in truth one of action, not contemplation. The career of France for the last half-century, or more, had been one of foreign aggression. Naples and the Milanese still remained to tempt the ambition of kings, and the day-dream of conquest, which had roused the energies of Charles VII., had come down to Francis, rendered more attractive by the adventitious concurrence of a nature singularly impulsive and ostentatiously sensitive to the pretensions of chivalry. Independent of all personal considerations, the governments of Europe had not yet ceased to vibrate at the first shock of that strange political maxim, unknown to the statesmen of earlier years, whose principle was proclaimed as the equilibrium of power. Nor was this all. By the side of that physical activity that attended the birth of the science of diplomacy into the world, there was in operation a revolution fated to produce results still more startling than even the alliance of the Most Christian King with the heir of Mahommed.

It has always struck me as a subject of peculiar interest, how it was that the religious reformation, which

has done so much for political liberty in England, should, in spite of the vigour of its efforts, have done so little for constitutional progress in France. The inquiry is hardly adapted for a parenthesis, but it would not be difficult to offer a superficial explanation of the phenomenon. The wars of religion in France were, I think—leaving a small margin for the necessary intermixture of questions not purely moral—religious wars. Protestantism, that produced at different times its Anabaptists in Germany, and its Fifth-monarchy men in England, was, particularly in its infancy in France, systematically isolated from the consideration of politics. Nothing can afford a clearer proof of this than the language held, not in the ballads and pamphlets of the hour, but in the authorized enactments and manifestos which were intended as counter-statements to the edicts of Catherine and the Lorraines. Free toleration of their religion, and free exercise of their worship, were, with scarcely an exception, the main articles of their treaties. “The execrable day of St. Bartholomew,” says Chateaubriand, “made France hosts of martyrs.” But confiscations, delations, the Estrapade and the *Chambre Ardente*, were not sufficient to make the martyrs democrats. When the cruelty of the Guises created the conspiracy of Amboise, the reformed refused to act with the malcontents till they had consulted the divines of Germany and Switzerland, and then only consented to co-operate when they found it lawful, with a Prince of the blood at their head, to oppose the Government of the Lorraines, and re-establish the Government of their King. Even after the Parliament of Paris had decreed the death of traitors to the heretics, the traitors themselves, in their proposal to bring lansquenets from Germany, and to receive the musqueteers of Elizabeth, declared that they had only the honour of God before their eyes, the liberation of the

king and queen, and the maintenance of the edicts. The chiefs who put their seals to the treaty of Milhau, never bound up in their alliance any principle of political fraternization, such as that which actuated, for example, the Tennis-court oath. Neither Condé nor L'Hôpital contemplated *lèse-majesté* in the association of the Consistorians with the Gentils-hommes. The Huguenot peasant, who rushed with his reaping-hook and pike against the gay marauders of the Butcher of Vassey, still prayed in the Sabbath assembly of his camp for the king, the queen-mother, the princes of the blood-royal, and the members of the King's Council. The sturdy veteran of Dreux, who shouted his devotion to the popular refrain of "Dieu garde de mal le petit homme," never had it in his thoughts to anticipate the author of the "*ça ira*." Coligni would never have dreamed of being the prototype of Mirabeau, or Navarre of acting Philip Egalité. Even on the other side the spirit of fanaticism never seriously propounded doctrines of political reform. The deed of Jacques Clement, it is true, was compared to the achievements of Judith and Eleazer. Guise was David, and Henri III. was Goliah. But the worthless abbés and priests who daily thundered from their pulpits in favour of the new Gideon, and filled their *papiers rouges* with fresh victims for the Seine, would have recoiled in their work of blood had they foreseen the conscription lists of the Directorat or the Consulat. The wretches who ground their children's bones to make them bread, rather than admit the fat Bearnise, were far from acknowledging the same motives as the Sansculottes and Poissardes of a later era.

In England the religious reformer and the politician were as one. The war was at once a secular war and a holy war. The fanatic who put to flight the proud Apollyons of Lindsey and Rupert, fanned his fanaticism

with the motives of the Parliamentarian. The Roundhead commemorated in his triumph at Naseby the triumph of those principles which he had inherited from Wycliffe, and the triumph of those principles which, through many a reverse, he had inherited from the testators of Magna Charta. In his conduct he was a zealot and a statesman, and in his principles he endorsed the sentiments of the "Pilgrim's Progress," and the sentiments of "Eikonoclastes." The traditional policy of his party comprehended the elements of that spiritual democracy known in Mediæval history by the name of the Pastoreaux, with the elements of that social democracy known by the name of the Jacquerie. Like the old military orders of Christendom, they contrived a union of two distinct interests. But unlike the Mediæval organization, religion, yielding to the exigencies of municipal development, divorced itself from the poetical alliance with Chivalry, to become the coadjutor of a more practical Sociology. A type for the English Revolution might easily be found among the examples of Southern Europe,—in the revolutions, for instance, of Florence. It would have been an easy task to have lighted on a Savonarola among the Pulpiters of Blackfriars, nor would it have been difficult to have met with representatives of the Piagnoni within the precincts of Westminster.

The difference of motive in the two revolutions—in the revolution as it was developed in England and in France—made itself visible in the different results. The legislation that represents the process and the extent of the reaction in England presents the anomalous appearance of great ecclesiastical reforms intermingling and co-operating with great civil reforms. Thus the legislative assembly is found to combine the duties of a convocation. The same enactment that preserves the liberty of the person maintains the liberty of conscience.

The same document that contains a proposal for a new liturgical directory, contains a proposal for a new limitation of the royal prerogative of the sword. The same legislation that destroys the Star Chamber destroys the High Commission Court. The same advocate who votes for the abolition of the House of Peers, votes for the imposition of the Covenant. And the same man that demands triennial Parliaments, declares himself dissatisfied without Presbyterian synods. This Erastian feature, so strongly developed in the reaction alluded to, has always, more or less, clung to all our subsequent revolutions. Thus our religious revolutions have never been altogether divorced from the consideration of politics, and our political revolutions have never been independent of the consideration of religion. The drama of our enfranchisement has, in its various stages, always reflected the operation of this principle. Such scenes as the execution of Charles and Laud, the imprisonment of the seven bishops, and the death of Monmouth, as they are characteristic of our final revolutions, so are they congenial to all their rehearsals.

In France it was far otherwise. The anti-Erastian principle, which, by the nature of the dominant religion, distinctly separated ecclesiastical supremacy from civil supremacy, dissociated civil encroachment from ecclesiastical encroachment, and consequently resistance to the ecclesiastical legislator from resistance to the civil legislator. Hence throughout the history of the popular struggle the two principles of action are never confounded. The liberty of the sect is never identified with the liberty of the subject. In discussion the demarcation is still more insisted on. The *Institution Chrétienne* claims no kindred purpose with Boetie's "*Voluntary Servitude*," or Hoffman's "*Franco Gallia*." The exposition of the Catholic faith, and the history of Protestant varia-

tions are far less political than the "Telemacque." It was not till nearly two centuries later that the identification, as in England, between political and religious interests, became stronger; and the result is manifested in the dismal historical association, which couples in the same page the story of the Mitrailades and the feasts of the Supreme Being, the "Rights of Man" and the "Age of Reason," the "Social Contract" and the "System of Nature."

If Huguenotism showed any particular attachment to a political principle, it was rather to aristocracy than democracy, as might indeed have been expected from its alliance with a dynastic question; nor would it require much scrutiny to detect in the various conflicts to which its amalgamation with the aristocratic element exposed it, the germ of that factious confusion which resulted in the Fronde.

In the great movements in which he lived Montaigne played no very important part. His natural character rather disposed him to an easy neutrality. His morality, ethical and political, was of too phlegmatic a temper to subject him to immoderate engagements. He had no interests at stake, and his propensities to mischief were not strong enough to warrant the disguise of zeal. To swim in troubled waters without fishing in them was the motto that regulated his activity. To light up one candle to St. Michael and another to his dragon—to follow the right cause even to the fire, but to do his utmost to avoid the fire—was his philosophy of duty. In spite of his ostentatious repudiation of prejudice, he had no sympathy with the genius of Protestantism, and scarcely was at the pains to conceal the fact that he regarded Protestants as fanatical innovators, possessing no higher views of innovation than to sing psalms in French instead of Latin, and to call their children Methusalems, Ezekiels, and Malachis, instead of Charleses, Louises, and

Francises. His ideas of toleration were hardly such as became the friend of Boetie.- He advocated, as indeed he was compelled to do, a kind of universal indulgence logically deduced from his own private principles of universal doubt, but founded on no large maxims of political science.

He hated innovation, civil and religious, with the cold and apathetic hatred of a man who could not appreciate its benefits. Change implied heresy, heresy implied choice, and choice the infirmity of human judgment renders slippery and uncertain. "*Ipsa consuetudo assentiendi periculosa esse videtur et lubrica,*" said the pagan philosopher, and the Christian philosopher repeated it after him. "In public affairs there is no government so ill, provided it be ancient and has been constant, that is not better than alteration. Our manners are infinitely corrupted, and wonderfully inclined to grow worse. Of our laws and customs there are many that are barbarous and monstrous ; nevertheless, by reason of the difficulty of reformation, and the danger of stirring things, if I could put something under to stay the wheel, and to keep it where it is, I would do it with all my heart. Happy people who do what they are commanded with greater facility than they who command, without tormenting themselves with the causes ; who suffer themselves gently to roll on after the celestial revolution. Obedience is never pure nor calm in him who argues or disputes." Hobbes or Filmer might have written the closing paragraph. Continued intercourse, as he surmised, with the humours of the ancients, had, I suspect, put him out of humour with his own times. No one could otherwise believe, save on some such principle of morbid partiality, that he was serious in applying to Charondas and Lycurgus epithets that he denied to L'Hôpital, any more than it could be believed that he

really thought the javelins of antiquity superior to the modern arquebus. It suggests curious reflections to hear the old Gascon of the sixteenth century describing Englishmen in terms that an Englishman of the nineteenth would be most entitled to retort, and expressing his shame and confusion that a nation with whom he had so great familiarity should despise the advice of Socrates, and indulge in as many legal whimsies as Persians or Indians.

No forecast of Rousseau or the Jacobins of Vendémiaire and Prairial could have flitted across the manuscript when he wrote that the best and most excellent government for every nation is that under which it has been maintained; that debates about the best forms of society and the most commodious rules to bind it are debates only proper for the exercise of wits, of fools aiming at the reputation of Pyrrha and Cadmus, and that the quatrain of his friend M. de Piras was the soundest wisdom :

Ayme l'estat, tel que tu le veois estre,
S'il est royal ayme la royauté ;
S'il est du père, ou bien communauté,
Ayme l'aussi ; car Dieu t'y a fait naistre.

The only authenticated instances in which the opinions of the essayist appear identified in the conduct of the man are connected with his presence in one or two of the various conflicts that were continually occurring in his neighbourhood. Mr. St. John has traced him at the age of twenty-five at the siege of Thionville by Guise and Strozzi. It is possible that he was present with Charles IX. at the taking of Rouen, and more than probable, from an allusion in his "Essays," that he witnessed the battle of Dreux.

Be this as it may, his intimacy at the Courts of Paris under successive monarchs leaves no doubt as to his sympathies or his loyalty. He was no enemy to Court

life, he tells us ; and his natural prudence, not without a show of simplicity and indifference, kept him safe under the treacherous patronage of Catharine. He loved himself too well to be guilty of ambition, and the timorous discretion with which he declared that he would sooner be the third in Perigord than the first at the Louvre, more than once recommended him to the Lorraines as a suitable agent in their negotiations with Navarre. As a man of letters, too, his experience in the capital of Henri II. could not have been without its attractions. That experience coincided with an epoch in the history of French literature. The appearance of the "Pleiades" was creating in French poetry a revolution not unlike, in its general characteristics, to that which English critics hold responsible for the so-called metaphysical era in English poetry. The erudite enthusiasm of Ronsard had already disengaged his contemporaries from their devotion to the elegant and arch simplicity of Marot, and half induced them to take part in the reaction with which his name is associated, and which was soon destined to encounter in its turn another reaction in the person of Malherbe. With such irritating topics for discussion, it is not difficult to conjecture how the essayist, who was already well known among the booksellers of the Quartier Latin, and had been admitted into the assemblies of Antoine de Baif, passed the time not occupied with attendance on Charles or Henri.

"From the slavery of Courts and public enjoyments," Montaigne, as an inscription still extant attests, "took refuge in the bosom of the learned virgins;" in other words, retired to his château, at the age of thirty-eight; and from the moment he retires his life becomes uninteresting. He had married at thirty-three, an age, which he does not omit to remark, was two years below the standard of Aristotle, and three above that of Plato ;

and his wife survived him, when he died of a quinsy in 1592.

As thus at the eleventh hour his wife has been introduced, it is but fair to say that Montaigne was not the misogynist he is sometimes represented to be. He has now and then written things about women that would have won him the friendship of Euripides, but there is no cause for showing that his marriage life was other than it should have been :

“ United, though divided, twain in one.”

I do not say that his appreciation of the sex was such as would induce him to subscribe to the chivalrous doctrines of the *Catéchisme de Philosophie Positive*, but I cannot help opposing to the charge of a recent Oxford Reviewer, “that he does not seem able even to conceive that there can be anything so excellent and refined as friendship in marriage,” his own assertion, in his own words, that “a good marriage refuses the company and condition of love, and endeavours to represent those of friendship. It is a gentle way of social life, full of constancy and confidingness, with an infinite number of solid offices and mutual obligations. No woman who has once tasted thereof would wish to stand in lieu of mistress to her husband. If she is lodged in his affections as wife, she is much more honourably and securely lodged.”

One event in his life must not be passed over. Montaigne had inherited from his father one of the most painful diseases that the flesh of man is heir to. As he had grown old, the malady had increased ; till at length, philosopher as he was, his philosophy fairly gave way. Not all the reasoning of the Porch could make an attack of nephritic colic a pleasure. For medicine and medical men, it had been his habit to express the most profound mistrust. Indeed, some of his most violent irony had

been spent on the profession of Celsus and Paracelsus. Travelling, on the other hand, he had always appreciated; and as he looked upon it as a general panacea, to travel he determined. The history of his travels long lay entombed in the family chest at the old Château Montaigne, and were only accidentally brought to light by the researches of a venturesome antiquarian. Permission to collate the manuscript was soon demanded and obtained. The paper was found to belong to the latter half of the sixteenth century. The villanous handwriting, and the still more villanous spelling, left no doubt as to the author. The style, too, frank and cynical, naïve and coarse, was still the style of the old egotist of the "Essays." Every circumstance identified it, and the prize, bearing on it the dust of two centuries, was finally given to the world.

The first feeling on perusing it is certainly one of disappointment. Montaigne set out in the spirit of a valetudinarian, and before he had half completed his journey the humours of the valetudinarian had fairly engrossed his whole attention. The activity of the waters at Baden, the superiority of the soups and salads of Linde to those of Perigord, and of the wines of Augsburg to those of Florence, the richness of the sheets at Inspruck, and of the curtains of Sterzinguen, the fineness of the bread at Bostan, the politeness of the German landlords contrasted with the landlords of Italy, the failure of crabs and feather-beds at Rovere, and of old wine at Vincenza, the cheapness of board at Padua and Bologna, the badness of the Roman mutton, scarcely compensated for by the luxury of artichokes and green peas in March, are items that very soon begin to form the staple products of his daily register, and are clearly considered of far more importance than the antiquity of a bronze medal, the course of an aqueduct, or the girth of

a column. It is amusing to see how the egotism of the invalid gradually overcomes the philosophy of the traveller. He is not five minutes in a village before he makes his secretary explore all the objects of comfort that the customs of the villagers supply, till at length the state of the dormitory and the kitchen becomes his gauge of civilization. Whether it is in some part due to the partiality of the secretary or not, it is certain that quite as much prominence is assigned to the fact of a people using pewter or earthenware, eating their eggs boiled or poached, or their truffles with or without vinegar and oil, as to their being Lutherans or Catholics, subjects of the Emperor or free mountaineers.

Those who look to find in the author the geniality of the classical tourist, such geniality as they meet with, for example, in the pages of Addison, will scarcely have their expectations realized. Addison, indeed, contemplated everything with the eye of an ancient Roman. The most trifling objects were associated in his mind with the familiar studies of his school-days. The first sight of the crafty porter bustling for his luggage on the wharves of Genoa instantly supplies him with half-a-dozen quotations from his "Virgil" and his "Silius Italicus." The lazy independence of the Neapolitan lazzaroni suggests a contrast from his "Statius." A storm in the Ligurian Gulf recalls to his mind the old character given it seventeen hundred years ago by Horace. The rustling of the olive-groves around Lake Larius drives him to his "Claudian;" and the fenny reeds of the slow Mincius to his "Georgics." The snow-white oxen that browsed by his side along the banks of the Clitumnus are still to him the sacred breed of Juvenal. In the marshes of Ravenna he hears the frogs croak as they croak in Martial's epigrams, and sees the stream of the Rubicon swollen beneath the thaw of the mountain snow, just as Lucian

had seen it. Even the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius he cannot contemplate without recollecting a counterpart in the miracle which Horace pretends to have witnessed with so much amusement at Gnatia :—

— “ Dehinc Gnatia lymphis

Iratis extracta dedit risusque jocosque,

Dum flammâ sine thura liquescere limine sacro

Persuadere cupit : credat Judæus Apella,

Non ego.”

Sat. 5, lib. 1.

Not thus Montaigne. There is very little of the spirit of the antiquarian in his movements. It cannot fail to strike every reader of his travels that a man who had written a book as full of Latin quotations as our own Burton's “Anatomy of Melancholy,” should pass through the scenes of classical antiquity with hardly a single reference to a Roman author. It is true that his secretary is responsible for a portion of his diary ; but what his secretary wrote, he always dictated, and what he dictated, he generally revised. At Padua, for instance, he gives us a particular account of the economy of living, is diligent in relating the chemical qualities of the hot-springs hard by, but forgets all about the knight-errantry of Antenor, and the description which Virgil has given us of its origin. All along the road from Rome to Tivoli, he sees the orchards as they struck the eye of Horace ; scents the steam of the sulphureous Albula, rank as when Martial gave it the epithet ; crosses the rich cascades of the Teverone, the “præceps Anio ;” but leaves them all without the passing tribute of a reminiscence to explain the machinery of the Cardinal of Ferrara's water-works. At Narni he asks for a particular soil, which he had read in his Pliny is softened by heat and dried by rain, but he never troubles himself to identify in the roaring abysses of the Velino and the Nar, the gulf through which the poet's Alecto shoots herself into hell. At Pavia he takes his readers with him across the Ticino,

whose singular transparency, so unusual for the mountain-fed streams of Italy, more than one poet has sung, but it is only to tell them that the beds have no mattresses, and that horses can be hired there for two *julios* a post.

What he does describe, however, it is but fair to say that the notes of Mr. Pepys himself are not made with more curious felicity. Rome was the principal object of his attraction; and accordingly, his diary at Rome is full of choice crumbs for those who will stoop to pick them up. The various religious ceremonies, novelties to the trans-Alpine stranger, next to the prescriptions of officious physicians, and the effects of his warm baths and cassia pills—for, in spite of his infidelity, Montaigne was continually sacrificing a cock to Esculapius—occupy him most. He happened to be present in the Holy City on Christmas-day, and curiosity and devotion led him to St. Peter's. The Pope, Gregory XIII., at that time past fourscore, but still prominent by his upright bearing, majestic countenance, and long white beard, administered mass in person. Around him were the Cardinals Medici, Caraffa, and Farnese, names full of significance to the student of Italian history. During the whole ceremony all remained seated with their caps on, talking and laughing. On another occasion, while the same Pope stood on the steps of St. Peter's, arrayed in full pontificals, and excommunicated the Huguenots, and all princes who should detain any estates belonging to Mother Church, the same cardinals stood by, and, at the sound of the anathema, held their sides with fits of laughter. What struck him most, however, was the singular contrivance at the administration of the sacrament, of using a particular instrument to imbibe the wine from the chalice, in order to avoid poison. Two things, which do not always fall to the lot of every

traveller to the Eternal City to witness, he had the good fortune to participate in—kissing the Pope's toe, and seeing a miracle. The latter operation was soon over: it consisted in the cure of a demoniac. The patient was held on his knees before the altar, secured by a cloth round the neck. The thaumaturgus, a priest, proceeded to exorcise the evil spirit with all the charms his breviary would supply, and then fell to attacking the poor victim with his fists as heartily as he could lay on. All his efforts, however, were unsuccessful till he had pronounced a fierce anathema with pix and taper in hand. The man was then released and sent home. The priest assured Montaigne that it was a very obstinate devil, but that he had the day before freed a woman of a very big devil indeed, that had long molested her, and had, in parting, spent his last venom on her by discharging through her mouth a quantity of nails and pins, and a lock of his hair. The process of kissing the Pope's toe was far more tedious, and Montaigne describes it in his best manner, though it may be suspected the devotee, at the bottom, regarded them both in much the same light as the essayist.

What interested him as much as anything during his stay at Rome was the treasures of the Vatican library. Here he was permitted—a permission which, he remarks, was denied to the French ambassador—to handle the manuscripts of his darling Seneca and Plutarch, and, among others of less notoriety, to turn over the pages of a Virgil—the rival claimant for antiquity to that which, more than a century after, Addison scrutinized in the library of St. Lawrence, at Florence. Both travellers observed that the first four lines, usually printed at the opening of the "*Æneid*," were wanting. Special courtesy seems to have been generally paid the old Gascon. One instance deserves to be noticed. He had brought with

him into Rome the few books he was in the habit of making his travelling companions; among them was a copy of his "Essays." All had been seized at his entrance; and certainly, if any one of them had less claim than another to be marked with the expurgata, it was the volume which contained the Apology for Sebond. It turned out, however, that he had nothing to fear. The system which had prosecuted Marot for eating bacon in Lent, and thrown Rabelais into a dungeon for learning Greek, was quite ready to overlook anything that, even if it were rather philosophical, was not absolutely Protestant. The volume was returned with the mark of the Maestro del Sacro Palasso. It had been objected, indeed, by the censor, that the word Tribune was used in an equivocal sense, rather more congenial to the atmosphere of old than new Rome; that the Apology for the Emperor Julian was not altogether orthodox; and that certain opinions on the education of children, and the punishment of criminals, were not becoming a layman; but the objections were overruled. Anything not in good taste they left to the author to expunge. Any censure that might have been accidentally passed on it, they begged him to disregard. In the meantime, they were bound to keep back a French translation of the "History of the Swiss," the translator being a heretic.

To these *mots de courtoisie*, as he designates them, we may be quite sure Montaigne was not altogether insensible. Few men, indeed, whatever patriotic eulogists may say to the contrary, ever possessed a larger share of self-importance. No alderman, councillor, or parvenu, was more quick to appreciate the slightest mark of respect that might add to his dignity. One of the earliest objects of his ambition had been the Order of St. Michael. He desired it, he said, above all things. Eventually his desire was gratified; but it was not till

the lavish distribution of it among knaves and panderers had made the honour very like a badge of dishonour. When he came to Rome, the idea of obtaining the title of Roman citizen took possession of his faculties. He "set all his wits to work" for the purpose ; and after some difficulty, and a good deal of manœuvring, thanks to the interference of the Pope's *major domo*, "who had taken a great fancy to him," he received the official document, couched, he takes care to add, "in the same complimentary terms that were addressed, on the like occasion, to Signor Jacomo Buoncompagnone, Duke of Sero, the 'Pope's own son.'" Indeed, it is in the diary of his travels far more than in his "Essays," that the latent vanity of his character is continually peeping out. It is evident that he does not stir without being conscious that he is a Frenchman, a knight, and lord-proprietor of the good patrimony of Montaigne. He does not pass a night in a hostelry without taking care, on quitting, to fix a copy of his arms over the door of the room he had occupied ; and it is well if he does not tell us how many crowns he gave the painter, and how many pence the man who made the frame. On one occasion, he had his bearings emblazoned in fine rich colours and gold, on canvas, and went so far as to induce his host to give him his oath that they should never be removed. If the authorities of the town through which he might chance to pass send him a stoup of wine, or the lady of the manor a brace of partridges, he is sure to detail the whole ceremony, the number of the sergeants who bring it, the dress of their uniform, and the rank of the officers. Any disguise to promote his own rank was welcome. At Augsburg, the burgo-master took him and his suite for a company of knights and barons. The mistake was too suggestive to be lost on our traveller. He instantly gave orders to his people

to conceal their names, and by no means to mention the rank of Messieurs. All that day he strutted up and down the thoroughfares of Augsburg unattended, "conceiving that this of itself served to make them be held in more honour." A compliment or a rebuff makes all the difference in the world with him. The Archduke Ferdinand of Austria refused him the privilege of kissing hands, and it is pitiable to witness his chagrin. But nothing can afford him greater satisfaction than the opportunity of telling how the Duke of Ferrara sent a gentleman of his court to receive them, how the Duke raised his cap as they entered, and how he remained uncovered all the while M. de Montaigne conversed with him. Even the rank of the Maestro del Sacro Palasso and his colleague, who overlooked his "Essays"—"both persons high in authority, and both eligible for Cardinals,"—does not escape him.

To the consideration of his "Essays" it is now time to devote ourselves, and that too, I trust, in a spirit very different from that of his Roman critics. Their composition, if we are to take the author's assertions literally, was purely a work of amusement, a something *pour passer le temps*. Nothing can be more earnest than his efforts to repudiate any serious constructions that sober people might be disposed to put on his labours. His only purpose, he avows, for committing such chimeras, such fantastic monsters to writing, is to make them ashamed of themselves, and of himself. They are mere trifles, beneath the notion of criticism, only fit to hover in a middle region, and to take with men of moderate capacities. They are only the fruits of a fagoting-up of stray pieces, collected to beguile the tedium of idleness, and only patched together at snatches. He is, he assures his friend, Madame du Duras, less a writer of books than anything else. Nothing could be more inimical to him

than the reputation of being a pretty fellow at writing, if such a trade was his sole claim for reputation. As for expecting to gain any reputation by these follies, he will be content if he does not come off the loser. There is nothing in all this, however, of the vanity and affectation of Horace Walpole, for instance. Montaigne, all the time he was depreciating them, publish them in whatever spirit he might, knew that his "Essays" must strike a generation accustomed only to tread the narrow rounds of scholastic philosophy. He knew that the furred doctors of the schools, the *lettre-ferits*—to use a Perigordian phrase—the letter marked, would be scandalized to see a layman degrading Aristotle from a logician to a mere man, and introducing Plato into an essay on coaches. Accordingly, he assumed, and barely assumed, the thin disguise of a mere trifler. It cost him nothing to depreciate his labours, and depreciate them he did, and with apparent good faith. But amid his half-lisped disparagements we can still trace the twinkling eye, and the smile that belies every stroke of the pen.

He was, indeed, safe to win in the teeth of every adversary. His "Essays" contained intrinsic captivations of their own, which no disparagement on his part could have weakened or impaired. That writer could never at any time have been without more than ordinary attractions that can, after the lapse of nearly three centuries, still excite a generous envy in the breasts of foreigners in possession of the "Spectators" and "Ramblers." To the palates of contemporaries satiated with the stately barrenness of academical learning his book offered the rich repast of a lively erudition garnished with an originality that has never been surpassed. It presented to them the enunciation of a novel truth, that the proper study of mankind is man, and that the study of man is not to be regulated by the domineering logic of the cloister or the cell. In

the illustration of this, its favourite theory, it traversed with them the records of ages long since considered as palæozoic, explored the secret recesses of history and of literature, brought them into communion in a familiar guise with the mysterious heroes of archæology, substantiated the phantoms of deeds that had been to the uninitiated hitherto as only names, and quickened into existence individualities that had been to them but as statues, disenchanted them of that fond idea implanted by the earliest stroke of the ferule, that antiquity is but a receptacle for demi-gods, and by way of degrading them from the giddy pinnacle of selfish exclusiveness on which the infatuation of habit and education had placed them, proved to them that Socrates might as well have been born at Geneva, and that Cicero was modelled of the same clay as a Perigordian ploughboy.

And all this it did in language natural and familiar, in discourses where the gaiety of the accomplished man of the world and the acuteness of the metaphysician meet and unite. It is the peculiar characteristic of Montaigne's fame, insisted on even by those who, to all appearance, have never read his works through, that he had the courage to rescue philosophy, as yet cribbed and cabined within the narrow circuit of the Academy, and to lead her with tripping step enough into broad and genial fields of speculation, not to be intruded into by the syllogism of the scholar, or the dogma of the pedant. There is sententiousness for the student, and the air *du monde*, the "air cavalier," as Malebranche calls it, for the courtier. The elegant trifler might with surprise have found in the pages of the old Gascon squire matter as irritating as anything he was accustomed to search for in his "Decameron," while the more laborious investigator rose from their perusal with the satisfaction of having learned more in one hour of the philosophy of human existence

than Doctors Seraphic or Beatific could have taught him in a lifetime.

To these attractions was added the attraction of a style singularly in unison with the object of the author and his works. It was precisely the informal, irregular style, epigrammatic as Rochefoucault's, adapted to the delivery of episodes and miscellanies. To the taste of most Englishmen, even in the diluted form of a translation, it possesses too much mannerism to be tolerated any length of time. Gifted with a large share of "dear wit and gay rhetoric" of his own, he overlaid it too thickly with artificial ornaments borrowed from the ancients, and thus repels where he meant to captivate, like the ill-judged Beauty in the "Retaliation,"

"Who beplasters with rouge her own natural red."

Anything pretending to the subtleties of rhetoric, Montaigne himself expressly disclaims with his usual self-denial :

"He was too warm, on picking work to dwell,
But faggoted his notions as they fell,
And if they rhymed and rattled, all was well."¹

He knows, he says, as little about ablative, conjunctive, substantive, or grammar as his lacquey. To use the expression of Malherbe, he was not preparing meat for cooks. Ronsard had proclaimed it as his mission to infuse richness and variety into the French of Marot, and had used the dialects of France as promiscuously as Homer used the dialects of Greece. Montaigne seems to have adopted a similar licence. The dialects of Normandy, of Poitiers, of Lyons, and of Mans were all the same to him. "And let Gascon step in if French will not suffice." On the whole, we may apply to him what Rochester wrote of a man, some of the comic features of

¹ Dryden, "Absalom and Achitophel."

whose character might easily be expanded into analogous proportions with his own :—

“ — His works do yet impart
More proofs of nature than of art ;
With just, bold strokes, he dashes here and there,
Showing great mastery with little care,
Scorning to varnish his good touches o'er,
To make the fools and women praise the more.”

Unfortunately, the sentiments and language of the “Essays” bear quite as much the stamp of freedom as the style. Though some of them were addressed to women, the delicacy of even the hardest reader is continually being shocked by an unlooked-for encounter with expressions and turns of thought that would not have been used by that notorious Duke of Beaufort, whom the contemporaries of Montaigne had christened the King of the Markets, and the fame of whose grossness is still preserved in the works of St. Evremond. On this matter we would not abate one syllable of Pascal’s strong and indignant exclamation: “Les défauts de Montaigne sont grands: il est plein des mots sales et déshonnêtes.”

A second charge, that of egotism, brought against him from the same quarter, it is not so difficult to palliate. That Montaigne is an egotist is certain; that he is not an egotist in the vulgar acceptation of the term is equally certain. The definition of selfishness, self-conceit, self-commendation, which we are accustomed to associate with the word, entirely fails when applied to him. The truth is, the Port-Royalists half acquitted him almost in the same breath that they accused him, when they explained their accusation to be, “le sot projet que Montaigne a de se peindre.” Montaigne himself confesses as much. There is no affected attempt to conceal the matter. Neither is there any frowardness to justify it. If he plays the fool, it is, as he says, at his

own expense, and nobody is concerned in it. What he tells of himself, he tells openly, and without partiality. His egotism commences, indeed, where another man's ends. He is far more explicit, far more communicative about his deficiencies than his excellences, and makes greater capital of his vices than his virtues. Custom, he acknowledges, has made a man's speaking of himself vicious, and positively forbids it in condemnation of the vanity that seems inseparably attached to the testimony men give of themselves. Just, as a general rule, this condemnation is unwarranted in the case of a writer who, to borrow his own estimate of Philip de Comines, is as free from vanity when speaking of himself as from affectation or envy when speaking of others. "*Que diable a-t'-on à faire de savoir ce qu'il aime !*" exclaimed the Scaligers and Dupuys ; but there is certainly as little conceit in the egotism that prompts a man to tell what wine he likes best, or whether he likes his venison high, or prefers salt-fish to the rump of a beccafico, as there is in that feeling of self-importance on the strength of which autobiographers consider themselves entitled to relate the extent of their patrimony or the colour of their hair.

The more than Boswellian candour with which Montaigne unfolds one by one the reduplications of his character, and exposes, to use his own forcible expression, the very veins, muscles, and tendons of his moral and physical anatomy, might strike a casual observer as indicative of a morbid unconsciousness of the claims of self-respect. Such, however, would be but a poor estimate of the object of the philosopher, however it might be true in part of the man. Montaigne makes his confessions knowingly and with a perfect sensibility to the consequences. And, though he affects neither the enthusiasm of Rousseau nor the impudence of Abelard, it is easy to see from the easy tone in which he scarcely

condescends to apologize for his hardihood, that he was equally indifferent to those consequences. None but a very bold man or a very vain one would have ventured on the experiment. Montaigne was both. He was vain, and vain enough to believe that the eccentricity of the motive which suggested the publication of his "Essays," would atone for his vanity in publishing them. He was conscious that the world would be made familiar with his faults, but the consciousness that it would overlook them in the contemplation of the novelty the exposure afforded added to his confidence. In spite, too, of his chapter on Vanity, the rare execution of the artist must not be forgotten as a plea. Montaigne was not blind to his own powers of analysis. Hence an air of self-complacency in his very self-humiliations. He portrays his defects only that he might show how graceful he can be in the portraiture, like those unhappy creatures who, born without hands or feet, forget their deformities in the pride and delight they take in exhibiting the delicacy with which they can thread a needle or ply a brush.

And it is certain that he has succeeded in his object. No book has been rendered more interesting to his readers by the very exposure that renders it so painful to the moralist. All the first impulses to disgust at the grotesqueness of a dissection which every man of taste must condemn, and which no man of any native delicacy would have submitted himself to, are sunk in the feelings of pleasure and curiosity with which we contemplate the results of the operation. Repulsive as is the audacity with which he lifts up "the stupid rag that hides his poor humanity," we forget it while we watch him catching the lights and shades of a character singularly chameleon-like in its complexion, and preserving the reflections of every hue as vividly as though he were endowed with the fabulous mirror of Lao; nor do we

find leisure to wonder at that strange inconsistency between his mental and moral organization, to which we are indebted for the most delightful book in the world,—that total absence of equilibrium between his intellect and his moral sense, while we listen to him relating with quaint and humorous minuteness all the habits of his mind and body, his preferences and prejudices, his unconquerable love of ease, his weakness of memory, his hatred of restraint, his contempt for ceremony, his distaste for society, his love of doubt, his sceptical inclinings; intermingled with still more garrulous details of his person,—what size he was, so short that it was with difficulty he could keep his legs amid the crowded streets of Paris, and of so poor a presence that strangers were continually transferring the obeisance due to the master of the house to his barber,—what kind of physiognomy he had, so jovial, but withal of such tolerable interpretation that on more than one occasion the arquebus of the freebooter had been arrested by its courteous intelligence,—what kind of voice he had, so loud and unmusical that he could not reduce it to a whisper even in moments of confidence; and descending in the scale of his propensities, how he liked his meats, roast better than boiled, and his bread without salt in it; how he could not dine without a clean napkin after the German fashion, and never made use of spoon or fork; how he could not endure long meals, and imitated Augustus in coming to table last; how, like Marius, he could not drink except out of a certain form of glass, and then must drink neither pure water nor pure wine; how, in spite of Plato's admonition, he slept as heavily as the great Scipio, though in unwarmed sheets; how he stood the snows of a Perigordian winter in only one pair of silk stockings, and wore a vulture's skin under his quilted doublet; how he hated

fogs, pedants, and stupid lacqueys, and loved scratching his ear above all things in the world. Bacon, in his essay on Discourse, tells us that he knew a man who was wont to say of the egotist in scorn, "He must needs be a wise man, he speaks so much of himself!" Montaigne's wisdom, at this rate of judging, it must be owned, must have surpassed that of Solomon. After all, however, it is some consolation to reflect that a little more of reserve, a little less of egotism, and his book would have degenerated into the sombre proportions of a mere ethical treatise, as neglected as his own "Seneca." If he has lost by his laborious candour, that at least has gained, and the gain is not imparted to another. It can only be acknowledged, in conclusion, that his self-immolation on the shrine of his own glory, the sacrifice of himself on the altar he had raised to his own renown, would have been far more appreciated, had it been accomplished without giving occasion to one of those—

"—— Books, the scandal of the shelves,
In which lewd sensualists print out themselves."

It is with considerable reluctance that I leave the company of the gossip for that of the metaphysician. While he lived Montaigne surrounded himself with doubts, and it is, perhaps, but a fair retaliation on him that his reputation should partake of the dubious character it does. On the very threshold of an inquiry into his tastes and prepossessions, the examiner meets with nothing but hesitation and conjecture. Was Montaigne a good Catholic? was he a Christian? are questions which everybody asks, and which no one can answer; and it is typical of the pyrrhonic condition in which he discharged the exigencies of his career that he has been claimed at once at Rome and at Ferney, that the foundations of these respective claims were rested on the one

single production of his mind, and that as far as that production is concerned, both claimants are amply justified in their pretensions. A discriminating taste might readily find sentiments in his "Essays," worthy of an honest Catholic, and even of a member of the Saint Union, while from the same source might be extracted pages that would form a fit preface to a Breviary of the Holy Philosophical Church of a later era.

One thing may be predicated of him without fear of contradiction or partisanship. It is certain that with the spiritual element of the great religious revolution that was going on around him, he did not identify himself either by word or deed. There is nothing in his book or his actions to show that he had any sympathy with the authors of the Confession of Augsburg, or that if he had openly renounced his allegiance to Rome he would have transferred it to Geneva. If he was disposed to show any sympathy with the reaction at all, it was not in its character of a Protestant reaction, but in its character of an intellectual one. His prepossessions were all on this side. His large and liberal mind could, in matters of literature, readily urge the plea for liberality. His prejudices in this respect had all been inherited from those gallant Deipnosophs who quoted the "Morgante Maggiore" at the table of Leo X., from those fine young libertines who, under the name of Pantagruelists, joined with Cardinal Du Bellay in pronouncing "Garagantua" to be a book *κατ' ἐξοχήν*. Had he lived a hundred years earlier, he would have been a welcome guest, along with Ficino, at the villa at Fiesole; or yet earlier still, he would have been among the most eager of those five thousand who day after day received their intellectual food from the lover of Heloise.

On the other hand, he never owned his associations by his demeanour. From his writings, indeed, he had

nothing to apprehend. Provided they contained nothing that could be translated into heresy; they were safe from the Index Purgatorius. He rather did his best to show that he was as good a Catholic as Guise. He kissed the Pope's toe, though he does not omit the opportunity for ridiculing the habit. He hung up his ex-voto at the shrine of Loretto, though he takes care to mention that the Grand Turk had just before done the same. If outward conformity be the test, then the decision must be that Montaigne was both a Catholic and a Christian. But the value of that conformity must be estimated by his own confessions, and his own confessions are, unfortunately for those who would vindicate his orthodoxy, radically at variance with the deductions to be drawn from his conduct. The truth is, like the Common Councilman in Goldsmith's Essays, he had his eyes wide open, and contrived to make his contemporaries believe that he was asleep. Every great moral revolution has its Montaignes, time-servers, trimmers,—

“— creatures of a double kind,—”

men who can reconcile themselves to the adoration of idols, while in secret they worship the True God—men who

“Build God a church, and laugh his Word to scorn.”

Why he should have been at the pains to blind the eyes of his generation is not so clear. Perhaps he thought, with Malherbe, that the best religion of a subject is that of his prince. “Some,” he writes, “impose upon the world that they believe that which they do not. Others, more in number, make themselves believe that they believe, not being able to penetrate into what it is to believe.” It might be that he ranked himself in the latter category. Perhaps he was content to regulate his conduct on the model of that docile, easy mind he has

elsewhere depicted as "making nought of its own judgment, neither disbelieving nor establishing any dogma against common observances, humble, obedient, disciplinable, studious, a sworn enemy of heresy, and consequently freeing itself from the vain and irreligious opinions of sectarianism." Or, once more, it may be that he intended to solve the whole enigma when he made the acknowledgment that "having incidentally begotten in himself a certain constancy of opinion, he did not easily change for fear of losing by the bargain; that as he was not capable of choosing he took other men's choice, and to keep himself from perpetually rolling, kept himself where Providence had placed him." At any rate it is not too much to say, and he himself owns to the fact, that he was not one of those higher and nobler souls he so finely alludes to, "more solid and clear-sighted than others, who by a long and religious investigation have obtained a more clear and penetrating insight into their creed, and have discovered the mysterious and divine secret of their ecclesiastical dispensation."

The general complexion of his character tends to contradict the assumption that Montaigne was a man likely to become a candidate for martyrdom. There was, indeed, a large share of hyperbole about him, of gesticulation, of frankness in the assertion of his views, and of emphasis in their maintenance—qualities which, sometimes, under easy circumstances, may compensate for a deficiency of moral courage. But there is no enthusiasm about him. Morally speaking, he does not betray a single well-defined partiality that could lay claim to the strength of a prejudice, or an opinion marked enough to involve the imputation of partisanship. So equivocal was his moderation, that more than once he had an opportunity of congratulating himself that he is a Guelf to

the Ghibellines, and a Ghibelline to the Guelfs. As for mere intellectual conviction, that alone never yet made a martyr. If it could, Galileo had not escaped the rack and pulleys. And even intellectual conviction he possessed as little on this as on any other subject.

There is this excuse for him ; he lived at a crisis when convictions of any kind were weak and unsettled. The “*Que sçais-je ?*” of his motto might well have been accepted as the general device of the age. Events were occurring around that might well have shaken a soberer mind than Montaigne’s in its confidence in human experience, in its estimate of human penetration. He saw all the old truths which had held the world in subjection for so many centuries rudely denied. In the general convulsion he recognized the veil which had concealed the mysteries of spiritualism rudely rent in twain. All the old associations had been torn up, and, as yet, nothing fixed, nothing certain, had been substituted in their place. The truth is, the sudden establishment of Protestantism must have presented to the mind of the observer phenomena as confounding as the establishment of Christianity itself. The intelligent Catholic may have regarded the reaction against Catholicism with amazement similar to that with which the penetrating minds of paganism, of such pagans as Pliny and Julian, regarded the great insurrection against the religion of Socrates and Varro.

As it was, the idea of doubt and uncertainty penetrated into the natural avenues of Montaigne’s understanding, and leavened the whole mass of his philosophy. His mind was not a profound one, but it was a comprehensive one, and its comprehensiveness was made to promote the infatuation. Stimulated, in spite of his habitual *fainéantise*, by a large and almost universal inquisitiveness, he set himself to scan the vast circle of human knowledge,

and then prepared to deduct from his inquiry the logical establishment of human ignorance. The essence of his philosophy, if philosophy it may be called, is embodied in his *Apology* for the work of Raymond De Sebond, and is propounded under cover of defending the old position of mysticism that faith is not founded on reason, by proving that reason has no foundation of its own. To this proof all the strength of his intellect, and the zeal and humour of his character, are directed by turns. Setting out with an investigation into the essential distinction between animals and man, he arrives at a conclusion analogous to that at which Helvetius arrived in his famous work on the Mind, and the very opposite to that which Hume afterwards maintains in one of his *Essays* (on the Instinct of Beasts), that there is less of difference between certain men and certain beasts than there is between some men and other men. The intelligence of the elephant, the sagacity of the dog, the fidelity of the horse, the subtlety of the fox, the prudence of the ant, and the deliberation of the spider and bee, are, to his mind, so many protests against that arrogance and presumption that would raise a middle wall of partition between the individual creature and the general creation. Of course, such a decision can only lead him to a general depreciation of human knowledge; and in the treatment of this his favourite theme, he appears to use Burke's famous expression—a very Vitruvius of ruin. What is man? Man is but a thing of nought! is the burden of his examination and discovery. The vanity of human achievements, the vanity of human wisdom, its fickleness, its frailty, its hesitation and doubts, are the principal accompaniments. Few, indeed, but must realize the utter weakness of unaided nature, as he summons up before them the records of its collected strength, contrasts its failures with its successes, its decisions with its disputes, its moments of variation

with its moments of stability, and then bids philosophy account for the picture.

The great blemish in Montaigne's reasoning is his singular one-sidedness. He seems to have started on his speculations unconsciously imbued with a principle of optimism. His imagination first attributed to human nature a standard of perfectibility to which it lays no claim, and then his judgment quarrelled with the contrast in the conception and the reality. The mental and physical constitution of man is limited by bounds, beyond which it may not transgress ; and Montaigne overlooked the consideration that the inanity of the speculations, the idleness of the opinions in which man sometimes indulged, is rather a testimony to the presumption than the imbecility of his nature. The failures of great geniuses are marks by which the observer may measure their strength rather than gauge their weakness. The helplessness of human philosophy on certain subjects but too plainly testifies to its fallibility, but does not invalidate its claims to consent on all. The various conflicting deductions of antiquity on matters of the most vital importance with which he fills up half his treatise—the ignorance which permitted Aristotle to assert that God is the heat of heaven ; or Zeno, that he is an animal ; or Parmenides, a circle—the poverty of discrimination which prompted Empedocles to teach that the soul is a thing of blood ; or Hesiod that it is a composition of clay and water ; or Thales, a nature without repose, and self-moving—the uncertainty that drove Plato, Epicurus, and Pythagoras to invent their ideas, atoms, and numbers, to explain the phenomenon of the universe—prove not that human reason is utterly incapable, but that those speculators whose examples he adduced were exercising their reason on matters too high for them, and for which it is not originally adapted.

Uncertainty in everything which does not come under the cognizance of the senses, or which is not revealed to us, is indeed the general condition of man's nature ; but it is a poor and comfortless philosophy that would plunge its disciple into the despair of scepticism, because it cannot give him the title to assume the arrogance of the dogmatist.

Even the senses, the beginning and the end of our knowledge, according to his account, he does not acquit of the inconsistencies of error. He had studied man as a moral and intellectual phenomenon, and the result of his study had been to find him wanting. But if moral philosophy presented to him nothing but a mass of unintelligible chimeras, in physical science he could recognize, to use his own contemptuous expression, only dreams and fanatic follies. The state of contemporary science was not, indeed, very encouraging to a man whose mind was imbued in epechism. Accordingly, he charges science with being nothing more than sophisticated poetry, and with imposing on mankind, "not that which really is, or what she really believes, but what she has contrived with the greatest and most plausible likelihood of truth." Every art has its presuppositions, on the merit of which it negotiates for its general acceptance ; and every presupposition is linked, as it were, in a league of amity, to promote the general imposition. Thus the logician refers the signification of words to the grammarian ; the rhetorician borrows his state of argument from the logician ; the poet his measure from the musician ; the geometrician his proportions from the arithmetician ; and the metaphysician takes physical conjecture for his foundation.

Those who would have Montaigne to be something more than the precursor of Charron, may, if they please to pursue the hint, consider this declamation against the

deductive process as a latent anticipation in favour of the philosophy of induction.¹ Indeed, it would not be difficult to find scattered here and there the seeds of other systems than Bacon's. His arraignment of our sense-knowledge—his interrogation, "How do we know that there are not sensitive faculties in nature fit to judge of the *occult properties* of things, the want of which keeps us ignorant of their essence?"—what does it suggest but the mendacity of our subjective knowledge, the position of Hume and Kant! There is much more of seminal science in Montaigne. Thus it is with the growth of knowledge, as it is with the growth of the globe. What appears to be new, the accurate explorer traces back to a long antiquity. For a period old systems lie buried beneath new crusts. Fresh layers are deposited. At length a disturbance takes place; curiosity is excited, and some venturesome archæologist disembogues the skeleton of a philosophy, or the sepulchred dust of what was once a vital theory.

The spirit which actuated Montaigne in these violent fits of depreciation is anything but a philosophic one. Ridiculing the presumption of dogmatists, he had unconsciously fallen into a dogmatism of a very unreasonable cast. A little more modesty might have taught him, in the language of Bacon, that those who complain of the

¹ My readers may not be unwilling to compare two extracts, one from the "Apology for Sebond," the other from the "Novum Organum:"—

"Every science has its principles, presupposed, by which judgment is everywhere kept in check. Our masters possess and gain beforehand as much room in our belief, as is necessary towards their conclusions; the assent and approbation we allow them giving them wherewith to draw us from the right and left, and to whirl us about at their pleasure. Let the generals which tyrannize over us be weighed in the balance."—MONTAIGNE.

"As things are at present conducted, a sudden transition is made from sensible objects and particular facts to general propositions, which are accounted principles, and round which, as around so many fixed poles, disputation and argument continually revolve."—BACON.

subtlety of nature, the entanglement of causes, and the imperfection of the human understanding, do rather choose to accuse the common state of men and things, than make confession of themselves.¹ Doubting, as he did, the efficacy of reason, he was compelled to rest himself contented with bare assertion, and with supporting his assertions by the authority of men to whom he had been all along denying any authority. It is but a realization of the blunderer in the "Progress of Error," who—

"With a clear and shining lamp supplied,
First puts it out, then takes it for a guide."

From this deficiency of argumentative proof, as well as from want of method and arrangement in his proof, the admirers of Montaigne have never claimed for him a higher position than that of a philosopher without a sect. There is nothing in him to intimate that he proposed to himself the foundation of a school. He made use of his reason to inquire and interrogate, but not to determine; and inquisitiveness without decision is too repugnant to the idea of system ever to beget one. His policy is to suggest the problem, but he does not venture to suggest the solution. There is not sufficient unity of purpose in his book, certainly not sufficient unity of plan, to form the consistent basis on which to rear the structure of an academy. Ben Jonson was right in bringing him forward as the master of those loose spirits, who, he says, turn over all books, and are equally searching in all papers—that will act out of what they presently find or meet without choice. "By which means it happens that what they have discredited or impugned in one week, they have hereafter or before extolled in the same manner."² The curious observer may possibly discover through all his deviations that a single thread still gives

¹ Pref. ad "Instaurat. Mag."

² "Discoveries." Art., Ingeniorum Discrimina.

connection and sequence to all his movements. But the miscellaneous manner in which he handled his theme hardly presents that uniformity of design which is to be found, for instance, in the characteristics of Shaftesbury. He hurries from subject to subject, with as little regard for classification as the author of the "Tales of the Princess Schezerade." Hence, in the course of his aberrations, he himself appears in a thousand different guises, at one time a Stoic, then an Epicurean, then a Stoic again. He had taken Plutarch and Seneca as his model, and the tone and style of his thought had become so completely identified with theirs that he could not sustain himself long in any position, or promise himself constancy in any discussion requiring even ordinary application and perseverance.

This assimilation of himself with the authors of antiquity is one of the most marked of Montaigne's characteristics. It filled his pages with ostentatious citations from the libraries of Greece and Rome, thereby setting the fashion of that pedantic abuse of quotation which long after Balzac attempted to ridicule in his "Barbon," and which, in our own country, Ben Jonson laughed at in his "Silent Woman," and Butler caricatured in his "Hudibras." But it affected him in points of far more serious importance than mere dialectical or rhetorical propriety. It affected him very visibly, for instance, in his sentiments on death and suicide. It would be difficult to name any author, not pretending to inspiration, who has handled more grandly or more solemnly that grandest and most solemn of all themes, the Mortality of Man. The necessity of the inevitable hour, the advantages of contemplating its approach, the philosophy of despising its arrival, are all urged over and over again with a pathos and an eloquence that might have been envied in the Porch or the Academy. But of

those loftier motives which, for the Christian, disarms the King of Terrors, robs the grave of its sting, and makes death itself the portal to life, he makes as little account as though he knew no more about the secrets of immortality than Epictetus, or any of those poetic heathens who filled their stanzas with stories about Charon and the Capacious Urn. Early training, again, may be permitted to explain the preference which he gives to Epaminondas, Alexander, and Cæsar, over the generals of his own day ; or to account for the zeal he displays about the factions of Consular Rome, contrasted with his apathetic demeanour towards the civil broils of his own country ; but no partiality can excuse his advocacy of voluntary death, the finest, as he calls it, of all deaths. It is true that in the height of his career he pretends to recollect the canon of the Creator against self-murder ; but though he pauses between the fortitude of Regulus and the weakness of Cato, it is clear that the balance of his decision is in favour of the εὐλογον ἐξαγωγήν of the Stoics. In his journey through Italy, he had seen Tasso pining in the dungeons of Ferrara. Addison, when he passed over the same ground, heard the gondoliers of Venice beguiling the toil of the oar with stanzas from the "Jerusalem Delivered." Montaigne could not mention the miserable plight of the poor poet without the cruel declaration that he had less of compassion than of anger for the man who could thus be content to survive himself and his works.

Such equivocal philosophy as this must, as a matter of course, considerably narrow Montaigne's reputation in the estimate of posterity. Whether his eccentricities, to call them by the mildest term, were the fruit of design or of accident, whether they formed part of his schemes, or whether they were not rather owing to the absence of all scheme, it is difficult to decide. The discursive, loose,

and unmethodical style in which he set down his thoughts must be held responsible for some of the apparent contradictions and mutations that chequered his judgment. At any rate, though he affords ample grounds for the charge of pyrrhonism, those who accuse him so positively of absolute irreligion do so at the risk of their own penetration. It will be more charitable to regard him rather as one of those

“—— Spirits of a middle sort,
Too black for heaven, yet too white for hell,
Who just dropped half way down, nor lower fell.”

What Montaigne's real merit as a thinker is, I conceive to be this. He was the first, who had the boldness in an age of pedants to strip pedantry of much of its domineering pretensions. In his position, as the recognized antagonist of conventionalism, he stood face to face with the accumulated dogmatism of centuries, and this too when the faggots were yet drying that were to burn Bruno. It is true that the extent of the reaction, the force of the rebound operated injuriously on his own character, that in the first enjoyment of freedom he was in danger of falling, and actually did fall into licentiousness. But it is certain that his very exaggerations were not without fruit. By pointing out to men with a boldness and a distinctness that could not but arrest attention the road to emancipation, he rendered them less tolerant of tyranny. By illustrating to them, with a positiveness of colouring almost revolting, the utter fallibility of human reason, he assisted them in their efforts to release themselves from the control of any other reason but their own. By teaching them, in a word, to doubt, he taught them, involuntarily indeed, and, like Balaam, against his intention, to examine. In this view, and in this view only, can Montaigne be regarded as an ally of the Reformation.

In many other respects he was far in advance of his generation. Indeed, whatever are his failings, however little Christianity owes to a sceptic who insinuated that the creed of the Christian is sustained by the same innate principle of credulity as that which actuates the Mahommedan or the Bhuddist, however Protestants may feel towards the bigot who thought Protestantism a mere "moral frenzy," it cannot be denied that society is indebted to the liberality of the thinker who, in an age when Baroco and Baralippton were supreme, published in language as modern as anything to be found in the *Tirocinium* of Cowper,¹ views of education enlightened enough to win the future approbation of Locke; who, while De Thou was filling his book with the grossest fictions of witchcraft, laughed to scorn the absurdities of demonology; and who, though a contemporary of the Estrapade, protested against the use of torture almost half a century before the use of torture had been authorized by the conduct of our own Bacon.

¹ It is no accident or inadvertence that has thus associated the poet and the philosopher. Those who will be at the pains to compare the "Review of Schools" and Montaigne's twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth Essays, will find ample compensation in tracing out not only an analogy of sentiment, but even a verbal identity, in the pages of the two authors.

CHAPTER II.

MILTON:—HIS POLITICS, PROSE WRITINGS, AND
BIOGRAPHERS.

Popular ignorance of Milton's early Idiosyncracies.—The Literary Tastes of his Youth.—A Positivist, and a Satirist.—His exoteric Education.—The tendency of Politics, from the Reformation, to be associated with Religious Considerations.—Origin of this Amalgamation.—Its Effect in producing Traitors on both sides; Champions and Parsons; Vanes and Hugh Peterses.—Its Influence on the Prerogative.—Striking Reactionary Spirit in the Present Century, illustrated by the Divorce between Legislation and Religion.—Attempt at Protests.—Mr. Gladstone's "Church and State."—Mr. Sewell's "Christian Politics."—This tendency to develop the Personality of the Social Unit neutralized, however, by the Press, and other Literary Corporations.—Return to Milton.—His Political Connection with Cromwell examined.—As a Politician contrasted with Southey.—Cromwell's Puritanism investigated by the light of his Letters.—Mr. Buckle's Assertion that the Great Rebellion was a War of Classes, examined and refuted.—Origin of the Scriptural and Pagan Complexions severally assumed by the English and French Revolutions.—Milton's Revolutionary Speculations futile.—Natural Aversion in the English Mind to Political Experiments.—Return of Charles.—Singular Contrasts in his Character and Habits.—Position of Milton.—His Prose Writings compared with Burke's.—Examination of his Biographies.—The Present Age the Age of Biography.—Cause of this.—Growth of Milton's Political Reputation.—Warburton.—Warton.—Merits of Johnson as Critic and Biographer.—The prevailing Views of History in his Day.—Present Taste for Heroizing.—Mr. Carlyle.—Damaging Influence on the Integrity of History.—Mr. Masson's "Life of Milton."—The Theory of the Association of History with Biography: How far Practicable.

MILTON somewhere compares the career of a great and a good man to a poem. Estimating a poem with reference to its dramatic divisions of a beginning, a middle, and an end, the comparison is singularly applicable to Milton's own career. His life comprehending, as it does, that great Epic in our history which relates the

portentous rape on English Liberty, exactly divides itself into three epochs, of which the rebellion forms the central and most conspicuous. Of the proem, or first part of his career, it is no paradox to say that nine educated persons out of ten have no well-defined conception. That his father was a Scrivener, that he lived in Bread Street at the sign of the Spread Eagle, that young Milton was generally considered by his neighbours a precocious child, rather given to Psalmody and Hebrew, that he went to St. Paul's School, that he left school for Christ's College, Cambridge, where by report of malice, he got whipped, and left Christ's College for Italy, where he saw Galileo fresh from prison, and finally that he returned from Italy to England, an Evangelical Alfieri filled with sonnetteering and patriotism, are the familiar circumstantial outlines which it is thought something like guiltiness to be ignorant of. But for the groundwork, the substance of the portrait, imagination or prejudice is left to do its best. The result is obvious. Imagination uncontrolled by facts takes refuge in its sole remaining guide, the popular principle that the child is father of the man; the process of moral and physical identification is pushed to the extreme, till by a species of anticipation all fair proportions in the order of development are rejected, and the dimensions of the man become the measure of the child. Instead of the boyhood of a great man being considered as the testator to his manhood, it is really made the legatee. The dawn is made to glow with the deep colouring of the noon-day blaze. His life is spelt backwards, and the fulfilments of maturity are read as the promises of youth. Thus, the infant Byron is the Giaour in petticoats, and thus, in the child Milton is to be seen nothing but the bearded gloom of the Regicide and the full-grown asceticism of the Puritan.

The truth is, it would have been difficult to find among the three thousand students of Cambridge, one to whom the rational enjoyments of life were more thoroughly acceptable, one more constitutionally susceptible of physical and intellectual pleasure. He was not, we may be assured, wild, did not make a Trinculo of himself, and certainly did not join his fellow-classmen in the noble game of duping prostitutes, and running off with heiresses. But his tastes for chaste pursuits no more constituted him an ascetic, than his love of fencing made him a debauché. Those who nicknamed him the Lady were as far from intending to caricature his sensitiveness, or to predicate of him that he took his precepts from the Stoic's Tub, as he was from laying claim to the reputation of gallantry when he owned to a modest familiarity with playhouses. Intellectually, no undergraduate could be less exclusive. In his college exercises may be traced all that liberality for which the future author of the *Areopagitica* contended. His college exercises, indeed, have been too long ignored in the consideration of his life; and, in the estimation of his early character, I suspect that out of his professed admirers, not ninety-nine out of a hundred have ever read them. Yet I feel quite sure not one out of the ninety-nine can have an adequate idea of Milton without reading them.

It would not be easy, for example, from any other source to discover that the author of the "*Paradise Lost*," in whose teeth has been so often cast the imputation of being an Anti-Copernican, was a philosopher in the very spirit of the Baconian philosophy, that in the closing struggle between scholasticism and positivism he arrayed himself on the side of Progress, just as in the coming struggle between a less spiritual prescription and a less spiritual reform, he was to array himself on the side of Liberty. Still less likely would

it be suspected that the author of *Comus* could himself so far yield to routine as to plead the worship of the Son of Circe, and to sacrifice to him in drolleries of Fescennine indelicacy, too nauseous even for that shaggy monster's rabble crew. The *Instauratio Magna* does not contain a fairer tribute to the superior worth of experimental science over Dialectic Sophistry, than is to be found in one of his Academic Orations. On the other hand, the *Encomium Moræ* does not employ language more equivocal than is to be encountered in another of them. All the humour of Horace is there, it is true, but it is accompanied with more than the grossness of Juvenal.

It is not difficult to reconcile these apparent incongruities. In the very midst of them may still be discerned the germs of those moral idiosyncracies, which have stamped on the character of the man a superscription of their own. Indeed, the very inconsistencies might with little skill be made to give a prominence to his normal habitude. If he plays the fool, as he expresses it with a vivacity not generally associated with the name of Milton, he displays a contempt for his occupation with a candid emphasis that can never be mistaken. In the very wit and merriment, never very delicate, with which he tickles the sides of the men who expose him for their amusement, he lashes the abuses of the system which authorizes the exposure with the fearlessness and dexterity of the future Smectymnuan. He joins in their fooleries, contributes to their galas, but with an ill-disguised irony he scorns his audience whilst he amuses them, and while their mirth is making capital of his wit, suffers his wit to make capital of their mirth. He hisses while they laugh, sneers when they applaud, and with the Hebrew Athlete in the hands of the Philistines, chastises his captors at the very moment that he makes sport for them.

If we quit his academical career, and look at what may be called the exoteric education of Milton, it will not be difficult to trace the influence of events on such a disposition, at once sanguine and impatient.

He was born in 1608, that is to say, he was born at the very dawn of the great crisis in the history of his country. Monarchy was on the very verge of its grand climacteric. Liberty, but tardily released from its swaddling clothes, had just begun to show the down upon the chin. Symptoms of a precocious and a vigorous growth had indeed been already revealed to a few observant prognosticators. We had just passed the most seditious age in English History. Europe was still ringing with the arraigning accents of the Spaniard Charles V., and the Frenchman Montaigne, that of all people on the face of the earth, the English is the most whimsical, and the most restless. The memory of the Wyatts and Devereux was still fresh in the minds of those who would have repudiated the imputation. Not that the impeachment deserved repudiation. They who have studied our constitution nosologically, know that the moments of extraordinary disturbance in its organism have eventually proved to it prognostications of extraordinary vitality. The genius of liberty refuses to dispense its healing power through a stagnant medium. The vital fluid of society must be stirred to the very depths ere the disease can be relieved. Like that Sacred Water, to be remedial it must be periodically troubled. By the time that Milton was ripe for college, the crisis had begun to assume a distinct physiognomical character. The balance of empire was trembling in the scales. The sceptre had long quitted the hands of the Barons. They had never recovered the Statute of Population and the Statute of Alienation. And while the influence of the aristocracy had been waning, the power of the commonalty was daily

rising. The last serf had been emancipated. So far back as Edward the Sixth's reign, that discriminating monarch had borne reluctant testimony to its growth when he complained that the grazier, the farmer, and the merchant became landed men, and called themselves gentlemen, "though they be but churls," and since Edward's time the association of the churl with the gentleman, had multiplied virtually as well as numerically, qualitatively as well as quantitatively. It is true that the effects of this impulse on the undercurrent of society were as yet not very visible, not visible enough to distract the attention of the youthful student from his Euripides and his Du Bartas. It is true, that the relative proportions of power in the governor and the governed still remained to all appearance unchanged, that the prerogative indulged in all its old caprices, and exercised unrestrained all its old privileges, fought the battle of Calvinism in Holland at one moment, and at the next burned Calvinists in Smithfield, punished the sinner that attended a bearbaiting on a Sabbath, and then punished the saint that would not attend a Whitsunale or a Morris-dance, promoted its Carrs and Villierses as it had promoted its Leicesters and Essexes, imprisoned its Hampdens and Prynnes, as it had imprisoned its Wentworths and Stricklands, republished its absolute theories and its despotic doctrines, and found its Cowels and Blackwoods, its Sibthorps and Manwayrings to reconsecrate them, as it had found its Parkers and Whitgifts to originate and embody them.

But to oppose these aggressions a reactionary spirit was springing up, reflecting indeed the material growth of society, but reflecting too another element, not so material in its recent development, a spirit differing from that spirit of sectarian enthusiasm, which, in Elizabeth's time, had plotted against her as a bastard, and as a

heretic compared her to Judith, and sighed for some Holofernes to do the deed ; but, at the same time, so far partaking of enthusiasm as to produce, if not Campions and Parsons, a race of men who, at least, saw incapacity in religious intolerance, and whose conduct was to be guided by that famous maxim, enunciated by the chief among them, that they who preach the best and pray the best, fight the best. What the historical origin of this spirit is, how it came to be an active potentiality on the side of political freedom, an irresistible co-agent in the scheme of society militant, will be best seen in tracing the rise of its canonical representatives in history.

If we would find the origin of that strange syncretism of politics and religion, theology and legislation, typified in the word Puritan, we must refer back to that religious Revolution, which posterity has consented to call the Reformation. There is, perhaps, no movement in history which offers so many anomalies to the penetration of the student. Its very birth was, so to speak, irregular. It did not spring like political revolutions from a graduated series of enactments, wrung from the gripe of tyranny. No antecedent acts of successful reform familiarized, as in a natural order of development, the final catastrophe. No compromise on compromise introduced the closing change. Up to the very date of Henry's secession, the Statute Book still bristled with penalties and disabilities. The old religion was still associated with power. It had weight on its side, and if it had not logical right, it had at least prescriptive right. Its dominancy, to all outward seeming, was more secure than that of its ally. Royalty, however temporarily triumphant, could not overlook that long list of historical protests which is headed with Magna Charta. For religion, its long career of ascendancy has only been interrupted by assaults that served but to confirm it. Its enemies had attacked it. They

had been discomfited, and their discomfiture had increased its strength. On a sudden Henry deserted it, and the balance of dominion was reversed. Without preliminary negotiation, with scarce a preliminary warning, it fell. Hence the abrupt outlines with which the great catastrophe stands out in the scroll of history. And hence too, the long system of compromise and negotiation, which instead of preceding, succeeded its fall. The suddenness of the event left no time for conviction. Some men feigned it, and accepted doctrines under one monarch to persecute for them under the next. Such were the Gardiners and Bonners. Others, of less hardihood, betrayed all the ludicrous oscillations of consciences too weak not to yield eventually, but too strong to be overcome at once. Such were the Cranmers and Jewels. The spirit of vacillation characterized the movement even to the very lengths of contradiction. Protestants and Catholics were dragged on the same hurdle to be burned at the same stake. The legislation reflected the character of the doctrine that originated it. The Bible was publicly exposed, but the printing of scripture disallowed. It was lawful to pray to Images, but it was not lawful to warrant their use from Holy Writ. It was legal to pray to the Saints, but not legal to expect favours from them. It was orthodox to pray for the souls of the departed, but informal to support the doctrine of the Mass. The Bible might be read in English, but the fagot was ordained for him who read the New Testament. The old rites had, in fact, been retained with new interpretations. The spirit was reserved, the letter only modified.

In the midst of this, the Act of Supremacy doubled the value of the royal power in England. No king in Europe exercised such authority, for no king in Europe had assumed the crozier with the sceptre. All that ecclesiastical jurisdiction which had so long been the ambition of

kings, for which they had cringed, intrigued, fought, was concentrated in the person of Henry the Eighth. The great problem of contemporary legislation, the reconciliation of the political and spiritual supremacy, a problem which the ingenuity of saints and the blood of Martyrs had failed to solve, the strong will, and stronger passions, of one man unravelled.

It is easy to see how one of the immediate effects of this duplicate Supremacy was to associate religion with politics, and how, from this association, political denominations came to be necessarily identified with religious denominations. And as Royalty was identified with theology, so loyalty became as one with orthodoxy, and disaffection with non-conformity. Prerogative and Church went hand in hand. Hooker's fourth and fifth propositions, that the Church, like other societies, is invested with power to make laws for its well being, and that when the Scripture is silent, human authority may interpose—together with his two last propositions, that all who are born within the confines of an establishment, and are baptized into it, are bound to submit to its ecclesiastical laws under penalties,—were not so much an apology for, as an authoritative justification of that policy which dictated Elizabeth's message to the Parliament on the third imprisonment of Wentworth, that the Commons might redress such popular grievances, as were complained of in the counties, but must leave all matters of state to herself, and the Council, and all matters of Church to herself and the bishops. Under this policy treason and heresy in the eyes of the law were as one. The High Commission turned over its victims to the civil magistrate as a heretic and schismatic; the civil magistrate passed him on to the hangman as a traitor and republican. In time, causes of conscience were considered as matters of faction. The Spiritual courts played into the hands of

the Temporal, and instead of being brow-beaten by Bishops and Proctors, the religious recusant was made to hold up his hands at the assizes before justices and juries as a felon. The Canon-law transferred him to the Common Law, Convocation to Westminster Hall.

Thus the coalition of political and religious supremacy at the hands of Henry the Eighth, was at first prejudicial to liberty. It put on laws and multiplied restrictions, which it cost a century of bloodshed to cancel and remove. Teleologically, however, it was favourable to liberty. It aggravated, no doubt, the means of oppression ; but it stimulated the motives of resistance. It created a new principle of resistance, as it created a novel protest for oppression. The evil and the panacea, the disease and the remedy, the means of action and the means of counteraction were begotten together. As theology entered into the composition of the tyranny, so it entered, too, into the composition of that reactionary power by which the tyranny fell. The cry of "No king, no bishop, no bishop, no king," while it well typified the Erastian ceremony, by which the Church was wedded to the State, suggested the means of defence, as well as the elements of aggression. Hitherto the Church had stood in somewhat antagonistic relation to the State. It obeyed another supremacy ; it looked for other patronage. It had its own order impatient of the honours of secular ordination ; and it had its own territorial patrimony, jealously impervious to secular encroachment. It had been, above all, its own legislator in matters of faith, and whether its legislation was popular or unpopular, it alone bore the consequences as it alone claimed the responsibility. This responsibility, with these consequences, the Act of Supremacy transferred to the Crown. Thus the monarch by doubling his power had doubled his liability. He made the prerogative weaker, when he was extending

the bounds of the prerogative. He decreased its strength, as he increased its accountability. If the Star Chamber had wounded the citizen through the side of the heretic, the Popular Chambers of Rhetoric wounded the Sovereign through the side of the Prelate. Persecution soon changed the religious recusant into the political recusant. It made him a traitor while he kept him a schismatic. Questions of discipline grew into questions of politics. Controversies about pluralities and non-residence, missals and antiphonals, square caps and tippets, were naturally exchanged for controversies about the right of magistrates to enforce *et-cætera* oaths, confiscations and imprisonments. Ridiculing Lambethisms, as the nickname went, gave place to high and angry speculations of an import that the authors of the *Martinæ Thesianæ* scarcely dreamed of.

Henry ought to have gone farther, or ought not to have gone so far. The new Establishment was an Institution founded on a compromise. He left it with many of the abuses of the Old Institution adhering to it, and what was not the case with the old institution, he left the Sovereign power as its sole responsible representative. The popular mind had far outstripped it, and the impulse to the popular mind had in a large degree been given by the very hand that now offered to restrain and curb it. That ensued, which might have been expected to ensue. The popular mind in its own defence refused to advance backward. The first enchantment had been broken. It refused to submit to the chains of a second, or listen to

“The backward mutters of dissevering power.”

Those who are acquainted with the Parliamentary History of Elizabeth's reign know how even thus early this amalgamation of the ecclesiastical and secular supremacy, this confusion of civil and religious obedience,

operated in propagating and encouraging the abstract principle of resistance to the prerogative. It was in the power of Elizabeth's successor to have taken advantage of the opportunity for an equitable settlement that had been lost at the Reformation. James had been a rigid Calvinist. He had been a Protestant of the purest kirk on earth. He had indeed been a Puritan in very thin disguise. But he changed with the climate. He recognized too vividly the value of supremacy to the crown to give it up. The Hampton Court Conference accordingly broke up, and all that the Solomon of his age did towards an accommodation, was to say that a Puritan was a Protestant frightened out of his wits, and that Puritan ministers looked more like Turks than Christians.

There is one extenuating circumstance for James's conduct. The religious crisis had produced strange phenomena in the world of political philosophy. Not the least strange of these phenomena was the anomalous position in which monarchy had been placed. The Church of Rome had been absolute in her tendencies. On principle she had, as a rule, identified her own cause with the cause of kings. Now, however, kings refused to accept of her alliance, and rejected her aid. In retaliation she converted her blessings into curses, and turned her support into resistance. Apostacy was not to be honoured with logic, and by a singular admixture of the popular dogma, that the Sovereignty of Kings is inferior to that of the people, with the absolute dogma that sovereigns have received of God the sword of punishment for heretics, she drew the comfortable deduction that an heretical sovereign is amenable to the tribunal of his people, and might be deposed, stabbed, or poisoned. By a process of counter-retaliation, the doctrine of one extreme sect became the teaching of the other. At least, if the spirit which actuated the reasoning of Bellarmine and Mariana,

was not identical with that which inflamed Knox and Goodman, the difference in their ultimate conclusion was very little, not greater indeed than the difference between the knife of Ravallac and the axe of the Rump. Thus by a strange coincidence, but an unavoidable one, the doctrine of resistance to kings, became a general subject of contemplation to both parties that divided Europe. Both those who were by force of prescriptive principle the allies of monarchy, and those who were by the force of position its enemies, seemed to have agreed in depreciating it.

In this dilemma, James proclaimed himself the Champion of Royalty. He entered the lists on his own behoof, and not content with that he picked up the gage on behalf of his neighbours. He became the representative of the intellectual reaction. Elizabeth had fought with arms against the physical aggression. James saw only the spiritual aggression, and he defied Bellarmine with his pen as Elizabeth had defied Parma with her chivalry. It is characteristic both of the man and the Reformed sovereign that the weapons which he employed should have been taken from the armoury of theology. Chancellor Egerton said of him, he had never seen the king and the priest more united in one person. If we add the title of pedant, we have his whole character. In his fits of ratiocination, he does not hesitate to bring the two latter titles to the support of the first. He lays more stress for example on a text from St. Paul than on his descent from the loins of Henry the Seventh. He evidently has more confidence in a *reductio ad absurdum*, or a couplet from Du Bartas, than in the statute of a Plantagenet. He sets more store by the book of Cowel disengaging kings from all laws, and the doctrine of Blackwood that the English were all slaves from the Norman Conquest, than he did on the will of Elizabeth. Either this was philosophy, or it was folly. Either

he was craftily opposing the "piggots," as he calls them, with their own weapons, or else he was unwittingly preparing weapons for their hands. When James bequeathed to his son his digest of arbitrary theories, loaded with dogmatic appeals to Solomon and David, Moses and Jethro, and charged him to keep it as Alexander kept the Iliads of Homer, the signs of the times might have forewarned him that the same authority would supply his son's enemies with pretexts for comparing him to Agag, and cutting him off like Ahab. It would have been more profitable for himself and his heir, had he confined himself to pedantic controversy only. To keep Voscus out of his chair of Divinity, to convict Arminius of schism in his grave, to reduce Cardinal Perron to a contradiction in terms, or prove Buchanan to be an "Archi-bellows" of rebellion, was trifling, it is true, but it was more harmless than the task of proving kings to be "justly called Gods," and subjects to be "mere pawns at chess."

Throughout the whole of James's reign, the alliance between the prerogative and theology grew stronger and stronger, till by the close of it, it was not difficult for a careful observer to foretell that things were quite as ripe for a religious revolution as for a political revolution, and that if there should be a political revolution, it would partake strongly of a religious character.

Such was the state of things when Milton went to college. Ere he had left it, Charles succeeded, and the religious complexion developed itself more markedly than ever. The press was restrained in favour of the sovereign prelacy. The licensers of the Press were compared by Sir Edward Deering, to the managers of the Index Expurgatorius. In spite of that grim wit which proposed to discharge the canons, dismount and melt them down, the convocational synod continued to pass canonical decrees, settling the extent of the king's power, and the source of

his order, defining treason and inflicting civil penalties. Churchmen were put into the commissions of Peace, and the chief of his order could boast that for the first time since Henry VIII., a bishop wielded the staff of a Lord Treasurer. The spirit of the legislation that built up this tyranny, naturally engendered the spirit of the legislation that destroyed it. The House of Commons not unfrequently engaged in the duties of a religious Council; Committees of religion were appointed, and the tenets of Armenius and Gomar contested with the punctiliousness of schoolmen. The synod at Dort was mentioned more often than the gathering at Runnymede. The names of Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr were invoked more often than those of the Montfords, and Marischals. Protests against images, crucifixes, altars and candles were engrossed on the same parchment with protests against salt, soap, and leather monopolies, and the oppressions of the Stannary Courts. The impositions of the prerogative were rebutted by texts from Ezekiel and Daniel, and its creatures condemned to the block out of Eusebius and St. Chrysostom.¹

Thus the temporal power taking advantage of its original association with the ecclesiastical power advanced its exorbitant claims under ecclesiastical pretexts. And thus came to be fought simultaneously the great battle of civil and religious freedom. The same result operating from the same cause may be traced in our second great revolution. The Patriots of 1688, who prayed for a Protestant wind, did not forget that the political doctrines of the Dispensing Power and of Passive Obedience had been enuntiated in Acts of Religious Indulgence.

It is interesting in reference to the discussion of this epoch to contemplate, by way of contrast, the striking reactionary tendency which seems to domineer steadily over the polity of the present century. The tendency of

¹ See "Parliamentary History," and the Trial of Laud.

the seventeenth century was undoubtedly to associate theology and politics. There is as little doubt that the principle which overrules the nineteenth is based on a practical divorce between religion and legislation. It would be possible, were this the proper place, to trace the operation, if not the rise, of the idea from the accidental severance of the bishops from the Executive at the Revolution. At that crisis the church was found wanting in its favourite doctrine of adhesion to the Crown. Whether jurors or nonjurors are implied, there could be no gainsaying the conclusion that the conduct of the Church was suggestive of an initial dissociation from the State. Since then, conservatism, it is true, has made its stand in the persons of both priest and layman. But the opponent of such doctrines as are enuntiated in Mr. Gladstone's "Church and State," and more grossly in Mr. Sewel's "Christian Politics," contents himself with pointing to the tendency of domestic legislation. Nor can it be denied that to the philosophic historian of the present epoch, the Secularization of education, the removal of religious disabilities to civil offices, the Abolition of Ecclesiastical jurisdiction in civil matters, the facilitation of Divorce on the one hand, and of Marriage on the other, will appear as so many stages in that drama, the catastrophe of which he predicts to be the ultimate reversal of old developments, and the dissolution of old bonds. Abroad too, he will probably observe that, though for a moment the legislative mind of Europe seemed to recur to the policy of Charles V., or Philip II., yet the phenomenon of the Holy Alliance eventually terminated in the invasion of the Vatican, and the propagation of such a breed as the *Hermes*, the *Ronges*, and the *Czerkys*; while the teaching of Madame Krudener, and the Concordat, nourished, if it did not logically create, the rude anti-Erastianism of About and La Guéronnière.

The exciting causes, or rather the main supports, of this divorce lie on the surface. The phenomenon itself argues no invidious hostility of the State directly to the Church. The truth is, the development of the individuality is the typical idea of the age. The tendency in all legislation is to dissociate the man from the member of the corporation. Though it is evident that this is the case, and not to be denied even by those who refuse to allow Mr. Mill's "Essay on Liberty" to be in any way a representative book, the exponent of an existing class in society, there is this to compensate them. While Government is relaxing its hold of the man, there is taking its place a large and varied machinery of affiliation, if the term may be used, which promises to be as active and as powerful as any purely governmental consideration has been, or could be. While the direct interference of the political legislature with the citizen is less, the citizen is becoming more and more political by indirect means. This is not the place for following out an idea, which it would be easy to expand into an essay. It is enough here to point to the Press and to Periodical literature, more impressive, because less ductile than the Press, to suggest at once the substitute which has offered itself in the place of Government. Philosophically speaking, the Press encourages combination. Each combination has its code of corporate opinions, binding on its members collectively, and exacting as well an individual allegiance. No mere governmental bond could be closer. This hint must suffice to explain accordingly, how, in the absence of a mere governmental bond, society can secure and does secure to itself its sectarianism and its doctrinaireism. On the platform, in the rostrum of the lecture-room, the engine is at work with an effectiveness and a facility that would surprise those seedlings of the Press, the pamphleteers of other days, the Swifts, Steeles, De Foes, could they glance

for a moment on Printing House Square or Exeter Hall. The principle of Corporation is paramount. The first step is to form an opinion ; the next, to form an association. Association is, in fact, one of the great dynamics of modern society. It is moral force *en masse*. If we look into the old civilizations, the idea of physical force at once appears to predominate. Men acted, not in a body, but by virtue of individual prowess. If we compare their philosophy of action with their present posterity's, the philosophy of Muscle with the philosophy of Mind, we might say that the former implies the redisintegration, the latter the unification of the many into the one.

It will probably excite more than ordinary curiosity to know how Milton's latest and most elaborate biographer will treat the only event left in his life to excite curiosity, his official connection with Cromwell. It ought to be indeed no longer a matter of controversy whether Milton was justified in retaining under the Protectorate the office he had accepted under the Republic. In great revolutions that steadfast uniformity cannot be looked for that characterizes the man who lives in a period of rest. Events come quick and diversified. Opinions, sometimes the product of events, sometimes the cause of them, pass through a rapid series of transformations. Founded on circumstances, they change with the circumstances on which they are founded. The dogmas of yesterday become the paradoxes of to-day. The speculations of to-day are the materials for the holocaust of the day after. Venerable principles, principles that have almost borne the unquestionable authority of intuitions, principles that have grown with a man's growth, ingrained themselves in his very being, become bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, are hurried before the revolutionary tribunal, tried, found wanting, and discarded for ever. In this dilemma the policy of the wise man is

plain. He preserves his reputation for constancy by being inconstant. He retains his relative by changing his positive position. He shifts with the current. He changes his means in order that he may preserve his ends.

That this principle of political adaptation was not hostile to the generally uncompromising genius of Milton, we have his own words for believing. In his oration for Plancius, Cicero laid it down as a maxim, that the same men are not always bound to obey the same opinions, but such as the circumstances of the country, the stream of popular opinion, and the preservation of peace seem to render necessary. In his second defence of the people of England, the English poet repeats the dictum of the Roman orator, and emphatically endorses it. That the circumstances of the country were such as justified not so much a change of opinion—for Milton's opinions were still unchangeably opposed to anarchy, to the tyranny of many, as to the tyranny of one—as a change of conduct, will scarcely be disallowed.

The Parliament of 1650, the Parliament which Cromwell put out of doors with less ceremony than he would have dispersed a mob of lacqueys, was not the Parliament of 1640, the Parliament which, amid the blazing of tar-barrels and the shouts of a nation, had abrogated one by one the accumulated usurpations of centuries. Those who would recognize the difference in the two stages of its existence, and would know how Milton appreciated that difference, may compare the picture he gives of it in the "Apology for Smectymnus," with his subsequent portrait in the "History of England." Alas! how had the fine gold become dim! The heroes whose exploits surpassed "the exploits of highest fame in prose and panegyrics of old," were now

“mere thieves in office.” The men who had sate in the commonwealth “as Gods,” whose ordinary surname had been the Fathers of their Country, were now mere “hucksters,” with no other knowledge of polity than could be collected from the shop and the warehouse. In truth, no antithesis would be rhetorical enough for the contrast. The Parliament had fallen indeed from its high estate. From an assembly of persons of gravity and wisdom, such as Clarendon speaks of, it had degenerated into a mere consistory of committee-men and sequestrators, too insignificant even, for the genius of Butler to caricature. At one moment the tool of its friends, at another the victim of its masters, it had become a mere channel through which were conveyed their wishes or their decrees. The most obsequious of the Plantagenet or Tudor Parliaments scarcely displayed such meanness, coupled with intervals of such tyranny. All the old machinery of arbitrary power was restored; all the old oppression reappeared, rendered ten times more irritating by the trifling demeanour of the oppressor. Military tribunals dignified with the name of High Courts of Justice, but in reality mere general Courts-martial, dispensed laws in a style even more summary than the Star Chamber. Tests more stringent than the tests of the old *régime* were imposed by Ecclesiastical Courts more intolerant than the Court of High Commission, and the Council of the North. For one unclean spirit cast out, seven more wicked than the first had been introduced. The press was shackled by regulations as irritating as any that ever issued from the manufactory of Laud. Taxes and excises more galling than ship-money or compulsory knighthood were multiplied yearly, monthly, weekly. The representation of the country was in confusion. Bills for regulating the elections were put off from Wednesday to Wednesday, and those who had

the spirit left to be facetious, remarked that the body which had passed the self-denial ordinance, had not sufficient self-denial among them to dissolve. The debates were held with closed doors, and so indifferent were the debaters to business, that the House rarely mustered fifty, and never mustered more than one hundred and twenty.¹

Peculation and bribery were so barefaced, that even some of their own associates refused to partake of the spoil, and so extortionate that the very leads and bells of cathedrals were set up to auction to supply it.² In the meantime, this remnant of a Parliament, not content with neglecting the serious business of the country, made a serious business of trifles. Though it feigned such activity as to usurp the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts of justice, by trying and giving sentence as Whitelocke words it, *secundum arbitrium*, its legislative aspirations rarely rose above patches, and rouge powder, the vocabulary of the swearer, or the morals of the Bordello. Its own jurisdiction had sunk so low, that scarce a sheriff could be found to notice its votes, or execute its orders.³ At home the sense of the nation showed itself strongly in petitions and protests. Women and boys clamoured for its dissolution at its very gates; and, if we are to believe Walker and Dugdale, its own fears accused the very public cooks of a conspiracy against it. Abroad the prestige of the nation was fast declining, and but for the soldiers, must have expired altogether. Its ambassadors were cudgelled in the public streets, murdered in their own houses, and insulted in the parks as

¹ "Parl. Hist.," vols. xix., xx.

² "Parl. Hist.," vol. xx. p. 91. Collegiate churches were saved by the poor majority of four. Ireton and Deverill Hollis were among the scrupulous few. Ludlow's "Mem.," vol. i. p. 371; and Appendix to "Parl. Hist. of England," vol. iii. p. 1602.

³ This appears from an act to enforce the sheriffs to their duty. "Parl. Hist.," vol. xix. p. 312.

robbers and dogs.¹ Such was the body whose privileges Cromwell is accused of usurping, and whose standard Milton is accused of deserting.

It is not easy to conceive how those, who couple the two men in the same accusation, can avoid giving to Milton the advantage of a joint acquittal. His career finds its justification, in fact, in the career of his associate. It would be entirely beside my purpose to enter into the merits of Cromwell's conduct. Most thoughtful persons have already made up their minds on the subject. But if honour abroad, and comparative peace at home; if the reverence of friends and the fear of enemies; if legislation based on the philosophy of Government, actuated by a spirit of justice, administered in a spirit of equity; if toleration, if liberty of person and liberty of conscience; if the achievement of all these things be an excuse for a single act of usurpation, then must it also be an excuse for a single act of tergiversation. It might be left to the temper of the inquirer to decide whether Milton's personal attachment to Cromwell had any influence on his acceptance of office under him. It is certain that in the works of Milton will be found the noblest panegyric of Cromwell in the language. But the same work contains words of advice and of warning, almost of remonstrance, couched in tones that suggest rather the unimpassioned co-operation of a mere political partizan, than the warm and yielding partiality of the personal favourite. It is certain, too, that Milton was not the man to sacrifice his convictions to his partiality. His was not the character to make favourites or to become a favourite. As a general rule, his temper was one to assert itself too strongly, even to the verge of defiance, to

¹ See some curious instances collected out of Whitelocke, the "*Mercurius Politicus*," Sir Edward Nicholas' Letters, and Carte, in "*Parl. Hist.*," vol. xix. p. 473.

be genial. It might gain compliance, or command respect, but hardly win affection. Even in his familiar correspondence, the careful observer will trace a tone of ceremoniousness, of superiority almost dictatorial, and singularly repulsive to the easy, ductile familiarity of comradeship. There was, to use a Baconian metaphor, very little of moisture in his disposition. Like the fleece of Gideon, while all remained damp he alone was dry. This characteristic appears in exaggerated proportions in his equivocal treatment of his wife. It manifests itself still more strongly in the cold judicial manner in which he handles the subject of divorce. And more than all it manifests itself in the rigid impartiality, the well-nigh unfeeling formality, with which in the *Eikonoclastes* he deals out a scanty measure of apology, or of compassion, for a fallen king. In phrenological phrase, his wonder or admiration was small indeed.

It may be justly charged against our men of letters, that consistency has not characterized them as a body. The most eminent among them have certainly not been notorious for either religious or political constancy. If we do not know enough of Dryden to decide without hesitation on his honesty of purpose, we know enough at least to justify hesitation. Swift, next to Dryden in eminence, was equal to him in versatility. Pope, if he had any principles at all, possessed them in subordination. Politically a democrat, even to socialism, religiously a papist, and philosophically or intellectually an Epechist at best, it may be left to his future biographers to discover his real faith. If we descend in the scale, the minor men of letters are scarcely more trustworthy examples than their superiors. Prior started in life a Whig and became a violent Tory. Rowe, once a Tory, would scarcely condescend to hold converse with Whigs.¹

¹ Spence's "Anecdotes," by Singer, p. 2.

Perhaps a man of equal poetic taste, and in some sense of equal business habitude with Milton, might be met with in Southey. But it would be simple injustice to compare the author of "Joan of Arc" with the author of the "Hymn to the Vaudois." Southey, under charitable construction, had two existences; up to middle age he was a boy possessed of the faculties of manhood; at two-and-thirty, when most men exhibit the fixity of age, he was just throwing off the hearty enthusiasm of Mrs. Cottle's back parlour. His training was, perhaps, the most miscellaneous that ever turned out an enthusiast. Neither the Church, Physic, nor the Law could fix the quicksilver of his mind. He took up from Westminster to Oxford a heart full of feeling and poetry, and a head full of Rousseau and Werter. Gibbon gave the tone to his theology; Tom Payne and the Abbé Sieyès to his politics. He had the same confidence that Southey, Seward, Lovel, and Co. should found a State which should be more enduring than Penn's, as he had in his after days that his "History of the Brazils" should be to the South Americans, what, to use his own expression, Herodotus is to Europe. No one need repeat the slanders of the men who printed his "Wat Tyler," and then cried for a new alphabet, that the old literature might be useless. His enemies would do foul wrong to his honest nature, in cataloguing even with the dubious Dryden the name of the man who in his youth had written panegyrics on Martin, and who lived to celebrate Laud, and to be pensioned by a Tory Ministry. But it must be owned that, though maturity and travel put to flight the extravagant dreams of Pantisocracy and Aspheteism, there is wanting throughout the tenor of his life the fixity of purpose, the robustness and constitutional concentrativeness, that penetrate through the life of Milton as through an Epic. Milton, in fact,

contrived a complete divorce between his two characters of poet and man of business. The secretary was never the poet, except in the embroidered richness of his official diction. Southey, the Reviewer, the author of a social Treatise, was Southey the author of "Madoc" and "Thalaba" still.

If Milton was no worshipper of Cromwell, there were still ties of association remaining, strong points of sympathy, strong lines of assimilation, to create a wondrous fellow-feeling between them. It is true that the Cromwell of 1658, the Cromwell who had purged Parliament, packed Parliament, created major-generals, created lords, was, to all outward appearance, no longer the Cromwell who, from among the fens of Huntingdon, cried out in the agony of his soul, that he was as one who lived in the blackness of Kedar, a hater of light, a lover of darkness, a chief, the chief of sinners.¹ But if there was not the old enthusiasm, there was still the old language. What originated in enthusiasm continued, it may have been, in policy. To the very last, the declarations, the manifestoes, the speeches, were mingled with what Clarendon would have called the spirit of cant, and Hugh Peters, the spirit of edification. To the very last there continued that tone of self-mortification, and those accents of self-denial that remind us, whenever they occur, of the chequered despair of the Grace Abounding. In public despatches, as in private letters, he is still such an one as formerly, having a body of sin and death, a poor looker-on, a weak instrument, that can do nothing but through believing, not worthy the name of a worm, a dry bone.² To public correspondents, as to private, to the Scotch Commissioners as to his cousin Robin, there are the same earnest appeals and

¹ "Letters," ed. Carlyle, vol. i. p. 141.

² Id. vol. i. pp. 391, 397, 472. vol. ii. pp. 162, 114.

textual exhortations. It is not for every eye to penetrate the secret emotions of the closet. Who could have suspected the orthodoxy of the man who holds negotiations with his enemies in the spirit of a divine, pilfers his watchwords from the war-songs of David, halts in the hottest pursuits to sing a Hymn, and dismisses his Parliament in the language of a theological Exegesis. It is not easy at this distance of time, when the lapse of two centuries has deteriorated to their original value the hyperboles of party and the gesticulations of partisans; when history, that searcher of hearts, has laid bare every muscle and every nerve; when we, who sit as judges, far removed from the sphere of contagion, can contemplate unimpassioned the factions of Lambeth and the factions of Grocer's Hall; can listen unmoved to the plea of the orthodox Pulpit, and the plea of the heterodox Tub; it is not easy for us, thus unbiassed, to penetrate the thick-woven veil of enthusiasm, and decide where the hollow mask ended, and the solid feature commenced.

Almost as an invariable rule the detractors of Cromwell have mistaken the exact point in which all doubts of his sincerity should centre. The question at issue is not, Were his words consistent with his deeds? but, Were his deeds consistent with the welfare of the State? It is not a question of means, it is a question of ends. It is true that the globe and the sceptre did not harmonize well with the self-repudiating tone, the unassuming garb, and the unworldly tastes. These were but the instruments, the tools, which the ignorance or the prejudice of the vulgar sometimes compels their benefactors to adopt. The hypocrisy of Cromwell must be decided not by the character of the agents that he used to effect his purpose, but by the nature of the purpose itself. Was that purpose in harmony with his previous

conduct? There is evidence to prove that Milton thought so. And if it was, then is Cromwell's hypocrisy, if hypocrisy it was, justified. The end that Cromwell proposed to himself, the settlement of the national differences, could, he clearly saw, be attained by no other means. If he must go on, it must be in the same track. If he would retain his co-operators with him in the good cause, it must be by gratifying their whims, even at the risk of his own reputation. The only compensation left him was, that those who approved the patriot vindicated the hypocrite. And with respect to the charge of hypocrisy, his advocates are not without a witness on his behalf. His letters would show that if Cromwell was a spiritual hypocrite, then were all Puritans, from Baxter to Bunyan, hypocrites as well. Nowhere else could be found a more perfect picture of æsthetic Puritanism. He is, in fact, the very representative man of those gloomy devotional enthusiasts. As he advances in life, it is clear that his enthusiasm waxes stronger rather than declines. Success seems to strengthen conviction. Every fresh victory is a fresh providence, "clear, unclouded, on behalf of the saints." In every action he sees the interposition of a present God. He would not argue with his cousin about abstract principles of obedience, about the lawfulness of this authority, and the unlawfulness of that. Such subtleties were but fleshly, fit for men of carnal minds, who live only upon their mumpsimus and sumpsimus. He appealed to fact. Did not the triumph of the cause prove the justice of the cause! Was it not God's finger that made the cavaliers of Rupert as stubble to their swords! Did Fairfax cut down those unrighteous Kentishmen? was it not rather God breaking the oppressor, as in the days of Midian? Ormond had been driven from Dublin, with the slaughter of four thousand men;

was it not a sign that the Lord was very near ? Drogheda had been stormed, and not thirty persons had been left alive in it ; it was to God that all honest hearts must give the praise ! It was the Spirit of God which had set it in their hearts to knock all the officers on the head, kill every tenth man, and ship the rest to a lingering death in the Barbadoes. It was God's revolution, not his ; God who had revealed the necessity of his reigning, not he.¹ Surely a man who could use such language as this might as easily have imposed on himself as have imposed on others ; might as easily have mistaken the exhausted acquiescence of the country for their approbation, and, when he climbed, have fancied it was they who pushed.

While on the subject of misapprehensions connected with the epoch, it might not be unprofitable to discuss one of an important character, supported by a considerable display of authority, and promising, on that support, to win considerable acquiescence. " That the Great Rebellion was a war of classes," says Mr. Buckle, in his very unequal work on civilization in England, " is one of those palpable facts which lie on the surface of history." It must be owned that, palpable as it is, it is a fact not likely to suggest itself seriously to an inquisitive reader, least of all to an inquisitive reader of another portion of Mr. Buckle's own book. A war of classes, as everybody knows, is emphatically a war of property. It can take place only in a community where so strong a line of distinction, moral and physical, is drawn between the rich and the poor, that it shall be the privilege of the rich to oppress the poor, and the interest of the poor to retaliate on the rich. Now, that it was not in the power of the privileged class in England at this particular epoch to use such pressure on the class below them

¹ " Letters," vol. i. pp. 233, 447, 468, 461.

as to provoke an insurrection, no one has shown more clearly than Mr. Buckle himself in another part of his researches.

For two centuries, that is to say, from the wars of the Roses, the personal and the legislative influence of the aristocracy had been slowly but surely declining. The time when their despotic arrogance could provoke the socialistic choruses of the Balls and Straws was gone by, never to return. The policy of the subtle Henry VII., the magnificent pride of Henry VIII., the overbearing temper of Elizabeth, had as effectually weakened the prestige of nobility, as the decrees of the Convention against liveries and coats of arms. It would not be easy to find specimens of presumptuous jurisdiction such as that which Mr. Buckle tells us in another country, and at a later age, consigned Marmontel and the Abbé Morellet to the Bastile. In a social point of view, the tendency of the upper classes and the lower classes was towards amalgamation rather than divergence. And, indeed, this spirit of affinity was almost necessitated by the nature of things. The social amalgamation was more than encouraged by the legislative amalgamation. Every one is familiar with that principle in our constitution by the operation of which hereditary authority is so intimately blended with democratic authority, the influence of rank with the power of office, that there can never be other than a combined interchange of sympathy between the plebeian and the patrician portions of the community. In the present crisis that sympathy showed itself in a very marked degree. So far was the aristocracy from provoking the jealousy of the democracy, that to a great extent they made the popular cause their own. In the House of Lords the arbitrary measures of Charles encountered opposition almost as obstinate as they had met with from the House of Commons. All matters of

grievance, matters of ecclesiastical innovation, infringements of the propriety of goods, breaches of Parliamentary privilege, were regularly discussed and decided on with almost invariable unanimity by the two Houses. When the citizens of London presented a petition to the fugitive king for a parliament, the peers, whom he had summoned to him at York, presented a petition to the same effect. A peer, Manchester, was among one of the six members whom Charles had impeached ; and in the great struggle against ship-money, a member of the peerage had stood side by side with the commoner Hampden.

As far as I can judge, Mr. Buckle has mistaken the material, so to speak, of the revolution for its spirit. He has been misled, probably, by the sneer of Hume, that the little Parliament was composed chiefly of low mechanics. Now, it is true that in the great contest the nation was divided into two sections, and that the nobles took the royal side, and the yeomanry and tradesman embraced the popular faction ; though even this cannot be allowed without considerable modification, since the popular armies were commanded by scions of noble houses. But this distribution of parties most surely does not prove that the contest was one of classes. It simply proves, that in a great nation there will always be found a considerable number in whom hereditary attachment and personal partiality will overcome the appreciation of justice and the sense of security. It cannot be denied, and I readily grant it, that in certain intervals in the struggle, the legislative power found itself lodged in the unclean hands of colonels who had been draymen, and majors who had once been tinkers and cobblers ; but these colonels and majors were, after all, mere passive agents, involuntary instruments, puppets placed in their high eminence by the

army, that is to say, by a class of men the majority of whom never dreamed, even in their wildest moments of excess, of anticipating the Gueux and the Sansculottes of another generation. Mr. Buckle has laid great stress on the abrogation of the House of Lords as a symptom of the prevalence of a great socialistic spirit. As he has been particularly minute in this item of proof, I will take the pains to follow him in his investigations.

The first practical protest against the peerage was the Self-denying Ordinance. Now it is clear as daylight that this measure was not a personal one; that it did not originate in any kindred spirit to that which at a future day saw incivism in the epaulette of a chevalier or the blue ribbon of a marquis; that, in fact, it only extended to the legislative capacity of the then existing remnant of an Upper House. Nor can it be doubted that the measure was one entirely justified by circumstances, whether it be regarded as an act of self-defence or an act of retaliation. For what had been the conduct of the chief member of that noble Rump towards the Commonwealth? Mr. Buckle, who has been particularly ingenious in misapplying a vast amount of industry in this portion of his history, shall tell us. "Just before the war began, the Earl of Essex was appointed general of the Parliamentary forces, with the Earl of Bedford as his lieutenant. A commission to raise troops was likewise given to the Earl of Manchester. Notwithstanding these marks of confidence, the nobles in whom Parliament was at first disposed to trust could not avoid showing the old leaven of their order. The Earl of Essex so conducted himself as to inspire the popular party with the greatest apprehensions of his treachery. The Earl of Bedford, though he had received a military command, did not hesitate to abandon those who con-

ferred it; the apostate noble fled from Westminster to Oxford, but finding the king did not receive him with favour, he returned to London." And how were these traitors to their high trust treated by the Commonwealth they had betrayed? Were they strung up to the nearest lantern? Were their heads, dripping in gore, kicked like footballs among the public gutters? or their hearts torn out and their blood drunk by the savage citizens to the sound of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity? Mr. Buckle should have added that Essex incurred no other penalty than that of receiving a pension of two thousand a-year, and Manchester no other degradation than that of being raised to a responsible seat in the committee of both kingdoms. As for the next enactment, the abolition of the Lords' House from the legislature, it was but an extension of the first measure, and the same arguments that justify the first measure justify it. The Upper House had become a mere faction of titled demagogues, a focus to which all the petty intrigues of small adventurers converged. Extreme cases demanded extreme measures. If Cromwell was to continue to fight the battle of liberty, such men as the Denbighs and Willoughbys must not continue to legislate for it. And it is certain that it was only against their legislative privileges that the measure was aimed. No popular fanaticism proceeded to strip them of their dignities. On the contrary, immediately on the abolition of the Upper House three of the members were returned to the Lower, and by way of special compliment¹ were voted to retain their former seats in committees. More than once it was agreed to preserve to them their rights according to the fundamental laws of the kingdom and the Covenant, and that, too, by the very council of war which numbered among its members some of Mr. Buckle's

¹ "Parl. Hist." vol. xix. p. 106.

most conspicuous draymen, serving-men, and tapsters.¹ As it was, too, so little was the measure approved by the majority, that when offered for the approbation of the executive council of state, consisting of forty-one, only nineteen would testify to it, though fourteen out of the forty-one were regicides.

And so far was it from reflecting a change in public opinion, that scarce a civil officer or a beneficed clergyman, even among the Presbyterians, subscribed their consent to it. Indeed, the respect with which the deprived member of the aristocracy was treated generally, amounted to a rather ludicrous anomaly. To the very last he retained his title and his precedence. If he went to a public dinner, the most ceremonious importunity was observed in giving him the highest place and the first accommodation.² Special notice was taken of his decease. Thus, when the Earl of Pembroke died, the House adjourned, in order that the members might attend his corpse out of town.³ The heirs of peers always succeeded to their father's title, and sometimes succeeded to their father's office.⁴ In the enactments of the House of Commons, the gradations of ranks were rigorously and, indeed, invidiously observed; and the marquis or baronet who should take the august name of his Creator in vain, was mulcted in a heavier fine than the squire, the gentleman, and the artisan.⁵ Even when the dregs of the lower classes had been raised to power by Cromwell, so little was personal animosity felt for the class

¹ Whitelocke, 288, quoted by Hallam. Mr. Buckle, who is fond of quoting Hallam, may perhaps make some future use of Hallam's opinion that "wise men might easily perceive that the regal power was only suspended through the force of circumstances, not abrogated by any real change in public opinion." "Const. Hist.," chap. x. part ii.

² See an amusing instance in the case of the Earl of Pembroke. "Parl. Hist.," vol. xix. p. 128.

³ Ibid. vol. xix. p. 248.

⁴ Ibid. p. 252.

⁵ Ibid. p. 285.

whose judicial rights they had absorbed, that in the midst of plunder and sequestration, a peer or peeress might calculate on having a settlement allowed them out of the forfeiture, to preserve their position and dignity.¹ There was, indeed, a trifling faction, a wretched band of robbers scarce worthy the name of a faction, the stragglers of the cause, who hung in the rear of the great movement, and indulged in the excesses of success, secretaries who bore the same position in it as the Capuchin Chabot, and the Abbé Sieyes, and who clamoured for King Jesus at one moment, and at the next conspired against all authority, human and divine. But these men, the adherents of no party, were persecuted and renounced by all. That the rational Levellers had no sympathy with their views of equality, we have their own disclaimer to vindicate them. "The levelling of all estates and qualities, these sober Levellers were never guilty of desiring," writes one of their most amiable adherents, Mr. Hutchinson.²

I cannot conceive how, with such proofs as these, any one could be disposed to speak of the English Revolution in the same terms that he would speak of the French Revolution, or apply to the one event the characteristics of the other. So far from its being a servile war, or, to use a less offensive word, a social war, it would seem more in accordance with historical deduction to adopt the nomenclature of the Scotch Commissioners, and to call it a *bellum episcopale*. It certainly is to be wondered that so distinguished an advocate of M. Comte's hierarchical distribution of history, as Mr. Buckle appears to be, should have missed the opportunity of devoting his energies towards discovering in the epoch a *fac-simile* of that philosopher's theological era. Such

¹ See the case of the Earl of Derby. "Parl. Hist.," vol. xx. p. 292.

² "Memoirs," p. 285.

characters as the Naylor and Foxes might easily have been exaggerated into the requirements of fetichism, while the saying of King Charles, in one of his negotiations with the Parliament, that it was "an age in which mankind are governed by the pulpit," might have been no bad foundation for a series of constructive illustrations. As it is, however he may attempt to confound Puritanism with Fourierism, I suspect that the student who realizes aright that solemn struggle for administrative reform, will refuse to degrade it into a war of red caps and wooden shoes.

It is not difficult to explain how it came to pass that the movement should have assumed the theological aspect that it did. I have already traced the growth of the revolutionist. But coat, conduct, and ship money, though they may have produced the republican, did not produce the precisianist. Constitutional tyranny may have been responsible for the Regicide, but it was not responsible for the Saint. Every great physical insurrection has its complexion given it by some spiritual or intellectual agent. The French Revolution was nursed and cradled in the bosom of a contemporary philosophical movement; and, accordingly, the French Revolution developed itself in a speculative, philosophical dress. What the publication of the "Encyclopédie" was to the French Revolution, the publication of the Bible was to the English. The instruments of their respective agents are types of their respective civilization. The mind of France was older by two hundred years than the mind of England. The France of Voltaire with the France of Caxton are no more to be compared than the grown man with the child in the gocart. The intellectual cultivation of France was in its prime. For years her genius had been propounding great social problems, and solving them. For years the great questions of the

rights of man, of political liberty, and social amelioration, had been occupying the thoughts of statesmen to whom More was as an infant. Hence the intellectual cast of her revolution. Men flew for their lessons to their Aristotles and Livys, to the schools of Greece and to the models of Rome. In England, as in all Europe, antiquity was still severed from the eyes of the vulgar by the scarce receding night of mediævalism. The Bible was the only book of popular circulation. In its simple narrative was included all the philosophy, moral and political, of the multitude. Very few had read the "Politics," or had heard of the existence of such heroes as Brutus and Harmodius. But every child knew how the priest of God had hewn the oppressor before the altar of sacrifice. Every village blacksmith, to whom Scævola was a name unknown, had taken part, in his imagination, with the left-handed young Benjamite, whose dagger had found the heart of the Moabite prince; while scarce a village maiden who had not listened, with kindling eye, on the Sabbath bench, to the story of the Hebrew heroine, whose nail had smote the temple of the Canaanitish warrior till he died. Thus as both the French and English Revolutions were distinguished by a peculiar moral caste, so they both in their distinctions obeyed the impulse of a special spiritual agent. In both instances, indeed, that impulse exercised an undue influence. In both cases the alliance between the intellectual and physical agent was pushed to an almost comic exaggeration. The Jacobin put on the toga: the Puritan assumed the ephod. The Jacobin had his Ides; the Puritan his Sabbaths. The Puritan christened his church a synagogue; the Jacobin turned his into a pantheon. The Puritan christened his child Jerubbabel or Joshua; the Jacobin prefixed to his name Anarchasis or Gracchus. The Puritan appointed fasts regulated out of the book of

Deuteronomy; the Jacobin had his public feasts of Spartan broth from the receipt-book of Lycurgus. The Puritan legislated against paint, dancing, and stage plays; the Jacobin copied the toilets of Herculaneum, and, decked *à la Cleopatra*, *à la Diane*, and *à la Psyche*, tripped half naked to the orgies of the Champ de Mars.

I cannot think that Milton's plan of settlement, as it is embodied in his appeal to Monk, and his delineation of a free Commonwealth, was founded on a fair and rational view of circumstances. Cromwell was dead. There was no Joshua to take the place of that Moses. The assembly of constitution-mongers, that styled itself a Parliament, was, in truth, a likeness—and a very bad likeness—of the Rump. There was not the material for Monk to have formed even the nucleus of an Administration. To have framed and empannelled such a Constitution as Milton proposed—a Constitution which, as far as I can judge, would have split up the country into a number of separate interests, like the United Provinces, but ill-cemented by the central agency of a perpetual senate like that of Venice—would have required a slow and tedious process of elaboration, hardly suited to an emergency.

In addition to this, the tide which—as I have attempted to show—never ebbed very far, had turned in favour of Royalty. The greater part of the nation—as Milton indignantly acknowledges—was ready, and even anxious, for the revival of the old forms. Constitutionally, the national mind is unfavourable to fundamental revolutions. Its changes—always made with reluctance—are always introduced by slow degrees. It is owing to this steady aversion to rapid movements, that our legislative prosperity has not kept pace with our social. Four centuries had elapsed to our last great Revolution, since

the highway of liberty had been opened with so much solemnity in the meadow of Runnymede. All down that lengthened avenue of time, the eye may trace—and trace with pride—the busy footsteps of progress, ere the serf at one end of the vista had appeared as the citizen of the other. But no triumph can conceal the fact, that the interval, which had raised the comforts of mind and body ; exalted the standard of tastes ; made a gentleman of the boor, and a philosopher of the gentleman, had left them both but little advanced towards the tardy goal of political enfranchisement. To drop metaphor, the Bill of Rights was but a republication of Magna Charta. The claims it asserted were but the claims for an old inheritance. That it was nothing more emphatic than a republication, that these claims were simply recapitulative, marks the tribute which forbearance pays to oppression, when oppression is accompanied with fraud, and forbearance with credulity.

Nothing is more remarkable in our legislation than this retrospective spirit. Our provisions for the future are always founded on our experience of the past. Our reforms follow the abuse, as the rebound follows the blow. We act only because we are compelled to act. We complain only because there is a grievance that prompts the complaint. Our activity is only a counter-activity ; our resistance only a retaliation. The speculatively deontological, to speak in the Benthamese tongue, does not enter into the considerations of our chartism. This characteristic of it, making our legislation more deductive than inductive, has at least this advantage, that though we forfeit in some degree the benefit of theory, we reap the benefit of experience ; and though it discourages the discoveries of science, it holds out no flattery to the empiricism of the sciolist. Hence the neglect which constitutional models, framed on à

priori principles, however attractive, have always experienced among us. And hence, at this particular crisis, the futility of the stillborn speculations of Milton and the Rota Club.

There is another feature, too, in the national character, which co-operated strongly in producing a reaction against Cromwell's successor in favour of the dead King's heir. The English people, of all people in the world, are least impulsive in choosing their favourites, and least capricious in discarding them. They are slow to love, and slow to hate. In their revolutions—on those occasions when the gravity of their calmer moments yields to the pressure of an hysterical excitement—a certain sobriety of demeanour has never forsaken them. Their enthusiasm has never been divested of a natural phlegm. Impulse, however irresistible its proposals, has, in action, been always subdued, by the solemn observance of forms and ceremonies, into a seeming deliberation. Passion, with them, if it has not always been guided by the dictates of reason, has always affected a logical apology. The occasions where either impulse or passion has roused them to vengeance or requital, are rare. But when they have been moved to visit with their displeasure, or to make an offer of their esteem, their emotions have in neither case taken the form of paroxysms. Slow to anger, they have been slow to avenge. Thus, in their recent rising up to vengeance, they vented their indignation with the calmness of judges, rather than with the fury of executioners. The object of their vengeance was a monarch; but, though as great a tyrant as ever issued orders from Susa or Bagdad, there was nothing of the bowstring in their proceedings. Judgment regularly preceded execution. The hall which witnessed his trial, was the same hall which witnessed the ill-usage of his own victims. The forms of procedure were regulated,

as nearly as possible, by the voice of precedent. As little partiality was shown, as could be shown in a case where the tyranny of the accused had left none but his accusers to sit as his judges. Again, years after they adopted another king, with the same punctiliousness that they rejected his predecessor. They gave their allegiance with the same decorum that they withdrew it. And, as it was their interest to withdraw it, so it was not without an eye to interest that they gave it. Thus, their gifts have always had the mercenary air of bargains. As they never hate without a cause, so they never love without an equivalent. And thus, both their love and their hate are never too deep to be interrupted.

It was in obedience to the dictates of this peculiar organization, that they now acted as they did. They had cut off Charles's head. They now suffered him to be canonized. They had helped Cromwell to the crown. They now helped to string up his bones to Tyburn. Thirty years had elapsed since the sins of tyranny had been expiated in its blood. But nothing was thought of save the memory of the expiation. Only two years had elapsed since the Deliverer was laid in his tomb. But, in those two years, an overwhelming sea of troubles had half effaced the trophies of his life. The popularity of the one, therefore, rose in the same proportion as his injuries became more and more indistinct. The popularity of the other sank as the benefits derived from his presence became more and more neutralized.

To return to Milton. At no crisis in his career does the great patriot excite a profounder interest than in his position at the Restoration. There he stood, the last of a race of heroes, his giant limbs fettered, his hopes blighted, his dreams not realized, his liberty forfeited—that liberty to whose service he had consecrated the nerve of his youth, the sweat of his manhood, and the

wisdom of his age, and at whose shrine he had sacrificed the friendships of the learned, the blandishments of the noble, the peace of his mind, the very light of his eyes! Weary had that pilgrimage been, that toil of forty years. And what had it produced? He had seen many signs and wonders, he had seen a more obstinate Pharaoh overwhelmed in a more terrible fate, he had traversed that dreary wilderness, he had drunk of those bitter waters, and what was his reward! The dog had returned to his vomit, and the sow to wallow in the mire! The Israel of his heart had gone back to the fleshpots, the taskmasters, and the idols of Egypt! Milton, indeed, had probably foreboded it. In almost the last legacy which he bequeathed to his countrymen, his prophetic spirit had given them warning.

He probably divined the fruit from the nature of the tree. The education of Charles had fitted him for the life of an epicure rather than for that of a king. Few men, heirs to such high expectations, had been compelled to submit to such degradations. With a disposition singularly voluptuous, not so much with passion, strong and uncontrollable, as with a moral sense weak and ill-defined, and an integrity of purpose lethargic and infirm, the heir to three kingdoms had passed his life in the midst of privations and misfortunes. It was little to be wondered that a Quixotic Prince, who had lived hitherto a mere adventurer in the world, who had been subjected to indignities from hands that compensated for the betrayal of the father by insulting the son, whose privations had become a proverb, who had been compelled to shun the footsteps of his own subjects, and to live a wanderer in the woods of his own kingdom, who had been at one time a cook, at another a butler, who had lodged in a barn and dressed like a ploughman, who had been pensioned by one foreign monarch and turned out of his

retreat by another, who had been so profligate as to be suspected of robbing a church at Bruges, and so poor as to have received the hospitality of a citizen at Brussels, it is no marvel that a voluptuous prince should, when opportunity offered, have turned out a voluptuous monarch. To a temperament more accessible to impressions than Charles's, misfortune may have imparted lessons of gravity and seriousness. But Charles knew no restraints. Even the stately occupations of royalty he could not endure. He was, or affected to be, a sort of Rabelais among kings. He loved to enjoy the same freedom at Whitehall that he had enjoyed at the Hague. He brought to the throne the habits he had contracted in the dens of Paris and the cocklofts of Brussels. In his official demeanour, so to speak, he was a strange compound of the adventurer and the monarch. To the sobrieties of business he could never accustom himself. So long as he could feed his ducks in St. James's Park, or fish in the Thames at Datchet, or play at tennis in the Mall, or experimentalize in his laboratory, or crack jokes with Killigrew, or hum a song with D'Urfey, or have a passage of arms with the bear Hobbes, as he called him, or listen to the gossip of Evelyn or Pepys, or get some one to listen to his own Boscobel adventures, he was happy. This happiness nothing could disturb but the sight of Clarendon. Etiquette changed him in an instant to a cynic. Etiquette, indeed, he would not always put up with. Sometimes he shocked the stately ceremoniousness of his peers by sauntering into the council board with his dogs at his heels, or standing with his back to the fire and his hands behind his back, when he should have been composed on his throne in the presence of the assembled House of Lords. "A sauntering way with the fair sex," was the quality ascribed by one of our older histo-

rians to Edward IV. "Sauntering," said Mulgrave, "was Charles's sultana queen."

And yet the natural character of Charles was not fundamentally malicious. Most of his vices arose in the want of reflexion. It is well known that he was styled by his contemporaries, by those who knew him best, the Unthinking. It is only by the test of heedlessness that his inconsistencies can be accounted for; otherwise he is simply a bundle of inexplicable contradictions. He insulted his wife, and loved his children. He made a bad husband and a good father. He pretended to modesty as a man, and made no pretence to patriotism as a king. He was ashamed to ask his parliament for more money, yet he was not ashamed to receive a pension from Louis. He never paid his legal debts, and generally paid his debts of honour. He would not pay Dryden, but he could pay the Penderells. He would not give a monument to his father, yet he squandered seventy thousand on his mistresses. He set up for a patron, and forgot to bestow his patronage. He admired poetry, and neglected poets. He carried "*Hudibras*" in his pocket, and permitted Butler to starve. His very habits were inconsistent. He never did a wise thing, and was always surrounded by wits, by Clarendon and Rochester, by Dorset and Buckingham, by Etheredge and Sedley. He bore the reputation of a lazy debauché, yet he always rose at five and walked at a pace that astounded his nephew and irritated his court. Nor did his physiognomy correspond to his manners. His complexion was dark and saturnine, his eye large and black, yet he was known all over Europe as the merriest monarch of his day, as the man who came into his kingdom with a bon-mot, and died with a joke upon his lips. His features were naturally inclined to fierceness and his voice to harshness, yet he was resistless in gallantry, invincible in his amours, the

favourite of the voluptuous Castlemaine, the beautiful Querouaille, and the charming Stewart. As was the king, so was the court. The Jacobitism of Johnson, indeed, has induced him to depreciate its grossness as compared with that of the Hanoverian succession, but the reader of such books as Count Grammont's *Memoirs* will probably find it a relief to turn even to the sombre history of that seraglio, which witnessed the tragedy of Rizzio repeated in the murder of Königsmark, and the conquests of Carwell revived with prosaic decency in the German charms of Schulemburg and Kielmansegge.

Though the subject of Milton's poetry is an inexhaustible one, and the field that has borne such fruitful crops is still not without a rich ear for the venturesome reaper, yet it might be more profitable just now to thrust the sickle of criticism into the scarcely less luxurious pasture of the poet's prose writings.

In passing from the prose writings of Milton to those of Burke, it has often occurred to me, how entirely the apparent difference in the characteristics of authors depends not in an essential difference in their individual qualities, but in an accidental difference in their combination. Nothing at first sight can be more incongruous than the style of Milton by the style of Burke. The involved sentences, the tangled metaphors, the reduplicated imagery, the redundant verbiage have to the casual reader's ear but little of that harmonious ring which the musical periods of Burke give out. Yet upon examination it will be found that, though formally distinct, it is spiritually identical, though strongly opposed by virtue of construction, it is strongly and intimately assimilated by virtue of essence. Such is their latent similarity that in characterizing the two authors, the critic has occasion to use but one and the same language. Both were masters of their native tongue, though both sometimes deformed

that tongue with harsh and crabbed innovations of a foreign growth. Both were rich in the cumulative treasures of an exhaustless imagination, sometimes lavished by both with the imprudence of a too prodigal hand. Both possessed in an almost magic degree, a wondrous power of realization, and a copiousness of invention that in both sometimes outran it. In both was developed the faculty of magnifying the familiar, turning the dust of common opportunity into gold, and in the hands of both the uncouth vocabulary of science became malleable to such a delicate consistency of sweetness with strength, as to realize the Saturnian prodigy of

“Honey sweating from the pores of oak.”¹

In their vices, the parallel holds equally good. Their vices were generally the vices of excess. Milton, like Burke, offends from exuberance. Like Burke, from a fatal facility of diction, and an excess of ductile power, he was too fond of distorting physical terms into a metaphysical significance. By way of illustrations, I subjoin specimens from both—specimens but little short of absolute caricature.

Burke.—“The royal establishment has shrunk into the polished littleness of modern elegance and personal accommodation. It has evaporated from gross concrete into an essence and rectified spirit of expense, when you have tons of ancient pomp in a vial of modern luxury.”²

Milton.—“It is still episcopacy that before all our eyes *worsens* and *slugs* the most learned of our ministers, who no sooner advanced to it but like a seething pot set to cool, exhale, and reek out the greatest part of their zeal, settling in a skinny congealment of ease and sloth at the top; their devotion most commonly coming to

¹ Dryden's “Ovid.”

² Speech on Economical Reform.

that queazy temper of lukewarmness, that gives a vomit to God himself.”¹

Burke.—“The minister was rasping from the marrowless bones of skeleton establishments an empirical alimentary powder, to diet into the similitude of health the languishing chimæras of fraudulent reformatations, desirous to draw a resource out of the crumbs dropped from the trenchers of penury.”

Milton.—“If God intended no such thing, we do injuriously in thinking to taste better of pure evangelic manna, by seasoning our mouths with the tainted scraps and fragments of an unknown table, and searching among the verminous and polluted rags dropped, overworn from the toiling shoulders of time, with these, deformedly to guild, and interlace the entire, the spotless, the undecaying robe of truth.”²

Burke.—“Never can these stings be extracted by all the surgery of murder; never can the throbbings they have created be assuaged by all the *emollient cataplasms* of robbery and confiscation.”³

Milton.—“Reality shall not turn to gold, but to the drops of scum and slavery, breeding and settling both in the bodies and souls of men such as do not in time with the *sovereign treacle* of sound doctrine fortify their hearts against her hierarchy.”⁴

Milton, like Burke, was deficient in humour, or rather, he failed in the process of being humorous. Nothing can be clumsier than some of Burke's attempts at drollery, as they are recorded in his writings and parliamentary experience, except some corresponding efforts of Milton, especially in the *Smectymnuan* and *Salmasian* controversies. It is easy to appreciate their value, when

¹ “Of Reformation in England.”

² “Of Palatial Episcopacy.”

³ “Letters on a Regicide Peace.”

⁴ “Reason of Church Government.”

the following is quoted as among the least contemptible of them. "I have not been so light as the palm of a bishop, which is the lightest thing in the world, when he brings out his Book of Ordination for them ; contrary to that which is wont in releasing out of prison, any one that will pay his fees, is laid hands on ! " ¹ But if Milton and Burke failed in the smaller warfare of caustic raillery, they wielded the deadly weapons of high invective with terrible effectiveness. Both their admirers and detractors, will probably agree, that in this item their passions, sometimes in the enunciation of their principles, overcame their sense of humanity and their sense of decorum. Justice and decency, manners and morality, would alike disclaim political animosity when it is accompanied with ribald vulgarity, and at once refuse to own the authenticity of such coarse delineation as the portraits of Benfield and Hastings, Salmasius and More.

If, in a general summary of Milton's characteristics, I should be asked to point out the predominating feature in his organism, I should unhesitatingly direct attention to his imagination. Perhaps the writer who stands at the farthest antipodes to Milton in this respect, is Johnson. I do not refer to his poetry, for that contains as little of the faculty that combines and creates, as it is possible for it to contain. But I speak of his prose writings. In his "Rambler," with the exception of a few stiff and formal allegories, I do not remember a single figure beyond the reach of an attorney. There are, indeed, a few incongruous images varnished, furbished up, and inserted to impose on the unwary. But it is easy to see that they never came from the workshop of nature, that they are composed of a metal that never came from the fiery crucible of the fancy. In his "Ras-selas" there was greater room, as, indeed, there was

¹ "Apology for Smectymnuus."

greater demand for the elements of imagery. But his "Rasselas" is even less imaginative than his "Rambler." Perhaps from it, more than from any other of his works, may be extracted more notorious instances of his frigid insusceptibility, his unimpassioned propriety. For example, he has to speak, or to make his Hermit speak, of the unmanliness of cloistered virtue. "I am sometimes ashamed to think that I could not secure myself from vice, but by retiring from the exercise of virtue, and begin to suspect that I was rather impelled by resentment than led by devotion into solitude. My fancy riots in scenes of folly, and I lament that I have lost so much, and gained so little. In solitude, if I escape the example of bad men, I want likewise the counsel and conversation of the good," &c. What a contrast to the fused warmth which Milton infuses into the same subject. "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised, and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race when that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. That virtue, which is but a youngling in a contemplation of earth, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental whiteness," &c.¹

I have spoken of Milton's power of realization, that wondrous power, which has made so many generations more familiar with the topography of Eden, than they are with the physical geography of their own continent, painted on their dazzled eyes the fiendish splendours of Pandemonium, high capital of Satan and his peers, the brazen folds, and golden architrave, the fretted roof, the frieze with bossy sculptures graven, and many a row pendent by subtle magic,

"Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With naphtha and asphalt."

¹ Areopagitica.

It is equally astonishing this fecundity of the realizing faculty in his prose writings. There are many episodes in them which stand out in bold relief, with the freshness and vividness of paintings. I doubt whether Swift or Defoe could have given the following idea more vividly :—" With less fervency was studied what St. Paul or St. John had written, than was listened to one that would say, Here he taught, here he stood, this was his stature, and thus he went habited ; and oh ! happy this house which harboured him, and that cold stone whereon he rested, this village wherein he wrought such a miracle, and that pavement bedewed with the warm effusion of his last blood, that spouted up into eternal roses to crown his martyrdom.¹" As in my own mind I have often applied to Burke, and to a greater, it may be, than Burke, the test which Burke so happily applied to Sir Joshua Reynolds, that " his portraits remind the spectator of the invention of history and the amenity of landscape," so now I would be understood to apply it to Milton. It forms one more tie of kindredship between the two writers. Perhaps it is this power of verification, so peculiar to both, that may account for their common attachment to the figure *Prosopopœia*. No one who is at all conversant with his writings can have forgotten to what effect Burke has employed it in his terrible portraits of *Sansculottism*. Those who can call to mind some of these portraits may not be unwilling to confront them with a specimen or two from Milton. The first is a personification of *Ex-communication*. " She is instant ; she beseeches, by the dear and sweet promises of salvation, she entices and woos ; by all the threatenings and thunders of the Law and rejected Gospel, she charges and adjures. This is all her armoury, her munition, her artillery. Then

¹ Of Prelatial Episcopacy.

she awaits with long sufferance and yet ardent zeal. As for the fogging proctorage of money, with such an eye as struck Gehazi with leprosy and Simon Magus with a curse, so does she look, and so threaten her fiery whip against that banking den of thieves who dare then baffle, and buy and sell the awful and majestic wrinkles of her brow.¹ The second, the most exquisite in the language, is a personification of Love. It will be found in the sixth chapter of his tract on the "Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce," where those who have the taste to appreciate it, will have the enterprise to search it out.

Here I close my comparison, imperfect as it is, between the writings of Milton and the writings of Burke. Those who are intimately acquainted with the actions of both, may perhaps extend it to an investigation of their characters. Nor indeed will they want items of similarity to interest and amuse. In their habits, their tastes, and their lives enough will be found to identify them. Both were singularly egotistic, yet both were singularly unselfish. Both were voraciously fond of learning, both injured their health in its acquisition, and both displayed the versatility of their learning on the same subjects. Both have left fragments of a history of their country. Both had the same early antipathy to mathematical science; both had the same preference for Euripides to Sophocles. The one wrote on the sublime and beautiful; the other illustrated it. There is not a dissimilarity in their respective destinies. Milton, like Burke, lived in a great revolutionary epoch, and, like Burke, took part in it with his pen; like Burke, he advocated the claims of rational freedom against tyranny and anarchy; and, like Burke, he procured to himself the suspicion of political apostacy for his pains. Like Burke he pushed his taste for reform

¹ Of "Reformation in England."

almost to empiricism ; and, like Burke, it was his fate to see most of his speculative reforms admired, applauded, and neglected. Like Burke, he was not a successful man. He wrote against prelacy, and he lived to see it restored ; he wrote against monarchy, and lived to feel the heavy hand of monarchy triumphant. Both fell on evil tongues and evil days. Country squires, fresh from the dog-kennel and the cider-tap, learned to laugh with impunity at the great statesman's speeches, and sting him to madness with their insults. The poet whose fame had made the tour of Europe, and extorted gifts from kings, lived to be the butt of every pot-house satirist who had wit enough to be blasphemous, and the aim of pulpit sarcasm to every Whitehall divine that had blasphemy enough to be witty.¹

It is decidedly suggestive of the liberality of the age, that so many biographies of Milton have been hazarded. For it is not mere caprice that overrules the fluctuations of an old writer's popularity. In the revolutionary period which preceded the accession of William, the prose works of Milton were reprinted. In that period of great social stagnation, when Bute ruled George the Third, and George the Third ruled England, Lord Monboddo was compelled to search for a copy of his writings among the presses of Amsterdam. Very suggestive indeed is the repute in which Milton stood at that time. Warburton was a bishop, and Warburton speaks of him in a tone which would have been severe had it been applied to the most venal Grub-Street hack. In a letter to Hurd, he confesses that though he disbelieves Lauder's forgeries, they had done good—mortified Milton's silly adorers. Warton confessed that his "Defence of the English People," was remembered no more. It was complained that though more than one pamphlet had appeared in

¹ See South's "Sermons."

defence of Hammond and Gray, more than four years had been allowed to elapse before a single word had been said in defence of the author of the "Paradise Lost." Perhaps, indeed, Johnson's Essay is best known as a criterion of Milton's popularity.

The "Lives of the Poets" presents a remarkable instance of what may be called the sustaining power of style and reputation. Johnson's book will always be read, and read with pleasure, but never with cordiality. Indeed, that sort of pleasure which the perusal of it provokes consists in the kind of vigilant dissonance which the judgment of the reader unremittingly maintains with his mere taste. Its composition is singularly attractive to him. The criticism which it embodies, operates upon him in the meanwhile with something of the gentle violence of an irritant. In perusing the "Lives," the conviction at once intrudes itself that the author displays, in remarkable co-existence, very strong qualifications with very strong disqualifications for the task. It would not have been easy for the booksellers who pitched upon Johnson, to have picked out of the republic of letters, a man more singularly adapted by his intellectual powers to have made such a book readable, at the same time more completely disqualified by his habits and tastes to have made it congenial or acceptable. Johnson, in fact, had but little poetry in his nature, and but little of the faculty of appreciating poetry. With the "Rambler," he was quite at home. Insisting on the art of living well, on the advantages of learned poverty, and the disadvantages of idle opulence, was his legitimate province, and it is one which he presides over with regal superiority. But in the realms of imagination, he sways the sceptre like a vulgar tyrant. It is not difficult to see from the "Lives" themselves where his real strength lay. A poet, who

should combine in his nature as little of real poetry, and as much of picturesque metaphysics as possible, was the character he was the least incapacitated to deal with. Such a poet was Pope. Accordingly, his treatment of Pope always has been, and always will be, least repugnant to a reader of sensibility.

It would be amusing to collect a few of the adverse criticisms which posterity has disallowed, and which one of the first great critical works in our language authorized. No writer, he asserts, since Pope's appearance wanted melody, though Gray, Collins, Savage, and Shenstone, who did not write till Pope was rotting in Twickenham Cemetery, are pronounced to be "all harsh." Rowe, we are told, seldom moves either pity or terror, though Rowe's "Lucan" is superior to the "Paradise Lost." Swift "excites no admiration;" perhaps the only feeling which he does excite. Thomson he could not read through. Churchill, the most muscular rhymester, to say the least, since Dryden, is "a shallow fellow." It is curious to see how at various stages of his life his judgment was warped by his principles or his tastes. Sometimes his nationality overcame him. Hume he speaks of as an echo of Voltaire; Voltaire as an empty Trinculo. Of Robertson's book he would not trust himself to speak. Akenside, more a Scotchman than an Englishman, though he assigns him a place among the poets, he yet owns to Boswell, he could never read through.¹ Sometimes his reverence for Christianity and the hierarchy interferes with him. Thus he gives the praise to Watts which he denies to Collins, though Collins was decidedly the Shelley of his century. His book, though professedly a criticism of the works of the poets, seldom includes their prose composition. Swift's prose works he does not even

¹ Though he elsewhere puts him above Gray and Mason.

catalogue. Of Milton's he says as little as he can possibly help, and that little not much to the purpose. He was not, in fact, calculated to form an estimate of such writings as Milton's. And for this reason. They were History; and of History Johnson had no appreciation. He took little of that burning interest in the fate of great men and great nations which the philosophic historian feels. The past was with him literally the past. Talking of an historian, he confesses him not half so interesting an object as the moralist. There is but a shallow stream of thought in history. All its colouring and philosophy is mere conjecture. It is no better than an almanack. Histories of the downfalls of kingdoms and the revolutions of empires, he writes in one of his *Ramblers* (60), are read with great tranquillity. With the same tranquillity, he owns, he contemplated the Highlands, unexcited by that strange mixture of Romance with History, which, to this day, thickens the breathing of the least sensitive traveller. Knox was to him a name as idle as Alaric. His followers as uninteresting as Goths. For Algernon Sidney and Lord William Russell, who loved political liberty well, if not wisely, he has no other name than "rascals." Of political liberty, Johnson seems to have had no very defined notion. He speaks of the question of the duration of Parliaments, for example, as so immaterial, that he would not give half-a-crown to turn the scale one way or the other. The legality of general warrants is, in his idea, a matter of perfect indifference.

It is but fair to say, in his views of History, Johnson only shared in the popular estimation. That estimation was not a high one. Pope had spoken of it in a strain equally trifling. Facts in ancient history, he says, are not very instructive now. We need not study history below the Pyrenean treaty, for since the Pyrenean treaty a new set of motives and principles rule Europe. So he

said, and so he averred Lord Bolingbroke had told him. *Æsthetically* Johnson had no sensibility, that quality on which, says Burke, depends judgment in the arts, and which is to ordinary discrimination what tears are to grief. He hated music. It was one of his curious prejudices. A fine singer with him only shared in the merit of a common canary-bird. He had such a contempt for painting, that he avowed that he would have sate in a room with the greatest masters with their backs turned. He was almost as blind as he was deaf. A fine prospect afforded him no pleasure. He travelled to Paris, and refused to look out of a window at the scenery. A blade of grass was a blade of grass, in France or in England.

It is very far from my wish or my intention to join in any vulgar depreciation of Johnson's character. This is not the time of day to overlook those large, and robust features, which knit like sinews the compact outlines of his mental stature. His later piety, slightly tinctured with superstition, it is true, his honesty sometimes exaggerated into blunt rudeness, are fair game for the captious, but ridicule cannot claim his unadulterated charity, and personal, if not, intellectual benevolence. At the same time, it is right to protest against the appearance of a *Johnsoniad*. The truth is, heroizing is the radical vice of the day. It is easy to see its origin. It arises from a strong tendency to allow that which our ancestors denied, its legitimate authority to the past. History is literally become philosophy teaching by example. We search out the examples, and we scrupulously extract the philosophy. The age is a retrospective one. We are, in fact, making capital of our ancestors. The dry bones are resuscitated. Breath is once more breathed into the nostrils. And in the pride of our vitalizing power, motives, and all the phenomena of mental and

moral existence are authoritatively assigned. There is this danger in our biological creation. The offspring bears too strongly the stamp of the parent. We impart, while we should receive. We invent, while we should only reproduce. History becomes either caricature or panegyric. The latter is now the order of the day. Thus we have had panegyrics on Henry the Eighth, on William, on Cromwell, and it is not unlikely that we are to have a panegyric on Frederick the Great. Seriously, such writers as Mr. Carlyle are doing incurable damage to the integrity of History. Their style is at once a suspicious agent in the cause of unadorned historical truth. It is not writing; it is painting. The strongest colours which the imagination can supply are pressed into service. A man who adopts this style of composition is clearly not his own master. He is the victim of his emotions. No ordinary demonstrations will suit him. The outlines of a commonplace character—of those sort of unostentatious characters of which history is composed—would sit tamely on his canvas. He must either laugh or weep, execrate or worship, sketch divinities or demons. His subject must be as much above the proportions of ordinary men, as Dryden's heroes, and if they are not, he fabricates them. To employ the silent language of capitals and *italics*, is a contraband interference with the conviction of the reader. Such artists are not historians, but lawyers; advocates, forestalling the decision of their audience by illicit agencies.

I do not say that Johnson wilfully or systematically adopted this plan in the case of Milton. But it cannot be denied that Johnson was not the man to write an appreciative paper on Milton. He simply wanted susceptibility, a power of discriminating, and realizing. His deficiencies did not escape the eye of contemporaries. In time, the palpable injustice of his critique

on Milton especially provoked retaliation. It was hinted that the man who wrote of the *Paradise Lost*, that its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure, was thinking of his pedagogue days at Market Bosworth School. The malignant assertion that all Milton's wives were virgins, was playfully construed into a bull, unworthy of the author of the *English Dictionary*. One trait in Johnson's character the critic aptly enough seized upon. His indifference to the beauties of the "*Allegro*" and "*Penseroso*" was attributed to his general aversion to nature. "Has he no taste for a landscape, a grove, or a spring?" asks the critic; "one would think the smoke of London as pleasant to him as a coalpit to a neighbour of Newcastle." General counter-criticisms followed rapidly. It was hinted that old age alone could have made the author insensible to the prettinesses of Shenstone, or to the lyric genius of Collins and Gray. "*Magnus Aristoteles, sed major veritas.*" Miss Seward owned to Hayley that she dreaded to peruse his volumes. Hayley in return compares the author to the Satan of Milton, cursing the sun for shining in that sphere from which he is for ever excluded. Johnson, indeed, rather opposed his criticism on Milton's poetry to the solid testimony of its popularity, offered by its circulation. Though Somers claims to have brought the poet into notice, his poetry early exacted a wondering and solemn admiration. While Swift was developing his genius, it had gone through fourteen editions. And before the poems of *Blenheim* and the *Campaign* had ceased to be talked of, Jacob Tonson averred that the poem he had ever got most by, had been the *Paradise Lost*.¹

In noticing the current biographies of Milton, it would be an omission to pass by Mr. David Masson's recent work, more particularly as its enterprising asso-

¹ Spence's "*Anecdotes*," by Singer, p. 261.

ciation of history proper with biography proper has attracted special notice. To the critical reader, while giving the author more than ordinary credit for a more than ordinary industry, it will seem to have failed precisely in those particulars where the effects of industry would be least visible or least appreciated, in the particulars of execution, arrangement, and what I may call, artistic association. The materials are there to superfluity; but their unmethodised regularity rather suggests the inharmonious uniformity of a lumber-room, than the scientific dependence of a museum.

In one of its elementary stages history is indisputably biography. The historian, yet young in political knowledge, is naturally shy of political speculation. His stock of philosophy is limited, because his stock of history, which may be termed philosophy in the making, is limited. He therefore leaves deduction for narration. His object is to appeal rather to the imagination than the reason; rather to provoke his reader's attention, than to excite his ratiocination. With this view he sets about to arrange his materials in the most attractive form he can devise, and he soon discovers that of all attractive forms the biographical is the most seductive and the most convenient. Within its accommodating compass he can exercise at will the privileges of expansion and compression. To select a hero, to group around him details sufficiently complete to maintain a unity of design, yet sufficiently curtailed to leave him the centre of the group—such, originally, was the care of the historiographer. Historiography was, in fact, Biography. Now, Biography is History. The compound feature is still there, but in the ingredients of the compound the proportions are reversed. The individual is lost in the events. The sphere of interest is enlarged at the expense of the personality. That of which Hume

justly complains in the dramas of Congreve, takes place. The principle of dramatic association is stretched to its utmost ; the slightest contiguity of time or place is considered a sufficient excuse for enlarging the plot. Events abnormally independent of each other are forced into a position of mutual dependence. The remotest incidents are pressed within the circle of vision, till the focal figure is eclipsed by the interposing mass. The chain of connexion is extended as far as ever it will go, and it is well if each link in the chain does not become the nucleus of an independent narrative.

It is easy to see how this taste for amplification may exceed the limits of dramatic propriety. In characterization the biographer is under similar obligations with the painter. He cannot, indeed, be too minute in the delineation of his central figure. Verisimilitude is his object ; and, accordingly, every muscle, every mole, is a candidate for verification. Cromwell, when he bade Lely put in every blotch, while he administered a just reproof to his violation of historic truth, administered at the same time a just reproof to his violation of artistic truth. He was, in fact, giving him a lesson in art, while he gave him a lesson in honesty. At the same time the truth, but nothing but the truth, is required. Excess is as criminal as suppression. The artist who should bury his subject amid an engrossing heap of accessories, is as guilty as he who leaves his outlines but half filled up. The sympathy of the spectator is continually being diverted by the diversities in the *tout ensemble*. His concern suffers repeated interruption. His curiosity sustains a breach, corresponding to each breach in the unity of design.

There are, it is true, occasions when the strictness of this canon may lawfully be relaxed—conditions under which biography may lawfully glide into history. The

biography of statesmen is necessarily a mixed biography ; the history of their lives is the history of their times. To understand the career of such men as Raleigh or Walpole, it is necessary to have an intimate acquaintance with the political events of half a century. Under these circumstances, no one would grudge their reams and their quartos to a livelier Nares or a more impartial Coxe. In the case of men of letters, other considerations present themselves. Pope and Johnson need no interpreters out of the precincts of the closet. The man who cannot distinguish between a Jacobite and a Whig, may still boast of a tolerably familiar idea of the author of the "Dunciad;" while the most indiscriminating critic that ever lived may form some conception of the writer of "Rasselas," even though the one never heard of the Excise Act, and though the other never read "Taxation no Tyranny." Literature may indeed be so completely associated with politics, that the man of letters may be almost identified with the politician. Here, again, exceptional phenomena interfere; and to appreciate the labours of a Dryden or a Swift, our researches must extend from the fabrication of bed-chamber intrigues, to the history of great dynastic revolutions. If we would become acquainted with the character of the poet who has bequeathed to us the "Absalom and Achitophel," we must penetrate into such vulgar mysteries as the fable of the "Black Box" and the fable of the "Warming-Pan." If we would study the lover of Stella, we must first study the peace of Utrecht.

But even in mixed biography, where the scope of the subject necessarily affects the scope of treatment, this licence to latitude can never be used too sparingly. The artistic inconveniences have been already alluded to; but there are reasons of equity, as well as reasons

of art, against the practice. By neglecting the division of labour, by blending into one the two departments of biography and history, injustice is certain to be done to one or other of them. A book professing, as Mr. Masson's book emphatically professes, such a combination, can hardly fail to contain matter totally irrelevant to the main design of a biography, or utterly inadequate to the co-ordinate design of a history. Readers of such books generally rise from them with the impression, either that the author has in reality undertaken the history of the times, only so far as it may elucidate the life, or else that he has engaged to write the life, only that he might write the history of the times. It might not be without its use, to remind authors of this class that by thus entering into a twofold contract with their readers they expose themselves to a double risk. They become indictable, in fact, on two distinct counts; amenable before the bar of criticism, on two separate liabilities. What their chances of justification are may easily be conceived. It is rare that acquittal follows on both charges; rare that the spirit as well as the letter of both engagements is carried out. It is rare, indeed, that a hit is made exactly between wind and water; that the boundary line which separates the historian from the biographer is not transgressed by one or other; that the history and the biography supply each their own experiences, and nothing more or nothing less; that the aggregate of the work, in fact, attains to the state of disjunctive fusion proposed by the title-page, and realized in the poet's pentameter—

“United, yet divided—twain in one.”

CHAPTER III.

DRYDEN, OR THE LITERARY MORALITY OF AN EPOCH.

Association of Intellectual and Material Elements in Civilization.—Social History and Intellectual History explain each other.—Machiavelli, Erasmus, D'Alembert.—Sforza, Henry VIII., Tom Paine.—English Society in the Seventeenth Century investigated.—Its Licentiousness *not* produced by the Commonwealth.—The two Eras contrasted in their Literature.—Bunyan.—Milton.—The Drama.—Its Power testified by Chesterfield, and its Immorality exemplified by the "Tatler" and the "Guardian."—Pope and Chesterfield influenced by it.—Dryden's position in the Movement.—His provoking Character.—A Trimmer all his Life.—His Conversion to Romanism examined, and Mr. Bell's theory.—Hallam.—Progress of Scepticism.—Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury.—Swift and Atterbury, Pope and Garth.—Critique on "The Hind and Panther."—Its Allegory defended.—Johnson.—Macaulay.—Dryden's striking Intellectuality.—His Conduct in the Literary Crisis, and Review of the Rise of Euphuism.—Singular inequality of his Genius.—His "Absalom and Achitophel."—His lenient View of Shaftesbury explained.—A Political Writer.—His Dramas Political Pamphlets.—The Old Dramatists not Politicians.—Authorship of the "Essay on Satire."—Growth of French Tastes.—Oldham.—Butler.—Addison.—The English Drama modelled on the French and Spanish.—Dryden's Theory of Tragedy founded on Ariosto.—Revolution in Taste in the next Generation curiously exemplified.—Low State of Criticism.—Rymer as a Critic.—Dryden's Prose Writings.—His Comedies.—His Controversy with Collier investigated.—His "Virgil."—National Interest in it.—Compared with Pope's "Homer."

THE communion that exists between the elements of civilization is perhaps more generally acknowledged than investigated. Yet civil and intellectual society present a remarkable analogy in their history. Sometimes the analogy is not so plain. Sometimes the harmony of their development is interrupted, and for a moment their relation to each other seems rather reactionary than co-operative. But concord is soon restored. The anta-

gonism is but temporary. The one element obeys the impulse which the other gives. The revolution on this side has ultimately procured a revolution on that. And the equipoise, only chronologically disturbed, is once more on the balance.

Nowhere is this law of association more potentially visible than in the phases of modern society; and indeed to study the composition of that society without a full appreciation of it, is to do violence to the unity and integrity of the philosophy of history. On this principle of affinity, literature is an index to civilization. An ode, a single ballad, the subtleties of a monastic doctor, the song of a troubadour, or the tale of a trouvère, thus acquire a gravity not comprehended by the ordinary reader. On the other hand, to the intelligent student a crusade and a miracle-play interpret each other. The twofold influence of a religion peculiarly objective, and a physical code peculiarly religious, is at once suggested to him. In the process of his researches, this idea of assimilation will be applied yet farther, to a greater refinement of adaptation. From contemplating its influence on the development of an era, he will ascend to trace its effects on the individual. Nor will he be long in identifying by way of specimen the intellectual causes which have bequeathed to him the "Prince," the "Encomium Moræ," and the "Encyclopédie," with the moral causes which at similar intervals produced their counterparts in Sforza, Henry VIII., and Tom Paine. Among all the examples of social and intellectual reciprocity, however, he will find none more prominent than that offered by the history of English society in the middle of the seventeenth century.

It is a common remark, that the licentiousness of the Restoration was the effect of the restraint of the Commonwealth. The fanaticism of one epoch, it is said,

nurtured, if it did not create, the infidelity of the other. The saints of to-day conceived the Atheists of to-morrow. The age of Puritan piety had been as episodical in England, as the age of academical Atheism afterwards was in France. The very exaggeration of the Puritan æsthetics had overthrown their system. The fervour of real sentiment had long since given place to the fancies of fashion. The symbols of a religion were depreciated to the mere external expressions of a mode. What had been begun in zeal was continued in affectation. There had been zeal, indeed, but it was emphatically a zeal not according to knowledge. Had the revolutionists been content with correcting the errors of a past generation, instead of prescribing rules for preserving the virtues of the present, had they cut off Charles's head, without cutting off their own beards, had they limited effectually the king's prerogative without corrupting the king's English, had they, in a word, been reformers without being Puritans, we should have had much less of vicious hypocrisy, and much less of open profligacy; much less of psalm-singing, but much less of sabbath-breaking; fewer religious meetings at Blackfriars, but fewer riotous assemblies at Whitehall; fewer such fanatics as Vane and Ireton, but fewer such debauchés as Rochester and Buckingham.

But though in effect it has thus been usual to charge the Commonwealth with the follies of the Restoration, the change of manners was too emphatic to be accounted for on the principle of a simple antithesis. It is not possible that, except (to use a pathological term) there had been a prior disposition, the body politic should have taken the disease with so much readiness and in so virulent a type. Those who are accustomed to study with attention the history of their country, must have discovered that, as far back as the beginning of the sixteenth century,

symptoms of a social reaction had manifested themselves. The nation, it was observed, divided in their theological and political opinions, had early assumed external characteristics by which those opinions might be known and testified. All along the history of the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles, may be traced, with topographical accuracy, the movements of the two sections, who developed themselves the more distinctly, the one under the Commonwealth, the other at the Restoration. The same gloomy affectations, the same spiritual eccentricities that distinguished the Puritan when Puritanism was triumphant at Whitehall, distinguished his ancestor when Puritanism shrank from the eye of Parker and Whitgift; and was to be looked for, not in the lobbies of the Royal Palace, but concealed in barns and under hedgerows, or stowed away in the holds of vessels bound for the distant settlements of the Mississippi and the Connecticut.

The propensity to place an excessive emphasis on the coarse jollity of the Restoration as the product of the Commonwealth, has not been without prejudice to the truth. It should rather seem that the social revolution was the result of a prior constitutional taint—that the sins of the children were begotten of the sins of the father,—that to the Roaring-boys, Roysterers, and Bonaventuras of the one period, we are indebted for the Scourers, Ballers, and Mohawks of the other, and to the rope-dancers, bear-baitings, ruffles and ringlets of the First Charles, for the Clevelands, the Lucy Walters, and the Nell Gwynns, of the Second. It cannot be denied, indeed, after an impartial survey of the tendency of the manners of the whole European aristocracy of the sixteenth century,—after a review ever so rapid, of the morality which presided at the courts of Francis, of Leo, of Mary, in Scotland, and of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth in

England, that the rough and homely virtues of the old territorial Feudalism had expired with it, and that the society which had witnessed the orgies of the Field of the Cloth of Gold,—which had produced the just retribution of Luther, and the unjust execution of More, the mysterious loves of Mary, and the mysterious amours of Leicester, was guilty of no very extravagant contrast, when it left the historian to befoul his page with such intrigues as the intrigues of the Cabal, and with such fabrications as the fabrication of the Black Box. The generation which had given cause for the disclosures of the English ambassador, Throgmorton, at the Court of Scotland, may well take the place of whipping-boy to the generation that had listened to the disclosures of the French ambassador, Barillon, at the Court of England.

That such immorality was allowed to go unimpeached must, in part, be ascribed to the absence of any legitimate organ of restraint. Profligacy, when it found itself irresponsible to public opinion, soon grew insubordinate. The moral balance, which the presence of a middle class too rich to be made the victims of vice, and too poor to indulge in its extravagances, maintains, was as yet inefficient. With a prerogative comparatively free and untrammelled, accidental qualifications in Charles co-operated. His personal endowments, his misfortunes, his good nature under them, acted strongly on the judgment of a people always ready to overlook peccadilloes that resulted in the head rather than in the heart. After the Revolution, and the recognition of a Third Estate, when the moral boundary that separated Blackfriars from Whitehall had disappeared; after the publication of the “Spectator,” it is only in the episodic disorganization attendant on a change of dynasty, that we find courtiers such as those that figure in the pages of Burnett, or

courtezans such as those that live on the canvas of Lely.

A safer estimate of the contrast between the two eras could not be obtained, than is afforded by a comparative view of their literature. The literature of the Commonwealth was after its kind scant, and too esoteric to live in exposure. But we may take the "Pilgrim's Progress" as one of the most genial specimens extant. No other book in modern times, except, perhaps the "Philosophical Dictionary," do we find so impregnated with the genius of the age. No other book stereotypes with such fidelity the very spirit of contemporary history. It is difficult to peruse that wonderful satire—for satire it undoubtedly is—without feeling that its author was inspired by the events happening around him, and that had there been no Cromwell, there would have been no Bunyan. In the fervid confessions of the "Grace Abounding," may be seen the embodiment of that enthusiasm which inspired the courage of Lilburne and Prynne. As far as the "Pilgrim's Progress" is concerned, it would be no novelty to adapt the abstract creations of the tinker's brain to the concrete world in which he moved, to find titles among the peers of Charles which should suit as personifications of my Lord Carnal-Delight, my Lord Luxurious, my Lord Desire-of-Vain-Glory, my old Lord Lechery, or likenesses among the perjured witnesses of Scroggs, to represent to the life such vermin as Pickthank, Envy, and Superstition. The characters, indeed, are far more easily adapted, because they are far more natural than even those of Butler, whose "Hudibras" it might not be unreasonable to regard as a counter-satire. Descending in the scale, it would not be fanciful to apply all the details of Bunyan's machinery, to trace out in those antiquarian relics, preserved with so much reverence in the Hall of the Palace by the Hill of Zion,

in Moses's rod, in the hammer and nails with which Jael slew Sisera, in the pitchers, trumpets, and lamps, with which Gideon put to flight the armies of Mideon, in the string and stone with which David slew the Philistine, and in the sword with which the Lord shall slay the Man of Sin in the day that he shall rise up to the prey, emblems of those very weapons with which the God-fearing dragoons of Fleetwood and Fairfax had put to rout the proud Apollyons of Rupert and Digby, and types, but ill-concealed, of that stern doctrine which, trampling under foot the high-flown superstition of the divine right of kings, left its embodiment in that gloomy parchment that Horace Walpole has christened the Magna Charta of England. Or take, for another example, the works of Milton. That the "Paradise Lost" was intended to have any allegorical signification cannot be predicated of it; but that the crisis in which the author wrote is reflected in the gloomy grandeur of his sentiments, is as reasonable a conjecture, as that Sackville should have been under local influence when he commenced his "Mirror of Magistrates." It would be a genial speculation, and only a speculation, that the terrible contest between good and evil, between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, shadowed forth in a dim and mysterious exaggeration, that fearful conflict between liberty and despotism, morality and immorality, the flesh and the spirit. The obdurate and ill-judged encroachment of Charles might not have been ill-represented, in the poet's mind, by that personification of ambition that,

"Would sooner reign in hell, than serve in heaven."

Be that as it may, the purity and sublimity of the "Paradise Lost" was as wholly uncongenial to the tastes of the generation who crowded the pits of the King's or the Duke's theatres, to listen to the blasphemy of Dorax and

the ravings of Antonio, as Don Sebastian would have been to the generation that preceded it. The subsequent alliance between literature and immorality was in truth complete. Talent has seldom been prostituted to such filthy purposes as it was by those intellects that crowded round the fireside of Wills'. There is, perhaps, but one other era in the history of modern civilization, when the ethics of a people have been systematically degraded to a level with the code of a Chinese or a Mussulman, the era directly preceding the French Revolution.

What encyclopædical philosophy had been to the moral revolution in France, the stage was to the moral revolution in England. The drama on a smaller scale took the place of a circulating library. The age of vulgar reading had not come in. Popular readers were few, and consequently popular authors were few. Between the metropolitan public and the author, there was no more efficient medium of communication than the stage. Nor was the influence of the stage in its capacity of mutual interpreter narrow and confined, as it may at first appear. On the contrary, the moral power of the English drama was every whit as great as the moral power of the Grecian drama, when Aristophanes laughed to scorn before an Athenian audience the sublimest of Athenian philosophers. A caricature by Shadwell was more effectual than a whole London Charivari. A single puppet show like Bartholomew Fair did more than a dozen proclamations. Chesterfield, years after, bears retrospective testimony in one of the most polished of his speeches. "When we were out of humour with Holland, Dryden the laureate wrote his play on the cruelty of the Dutch at Amboyna. When the affair of the Exclusion Bill was depending, he wrote his 'Duke of Guise.' When the Court took offence at the citizens, the stage was employed to expose them, as a parcel of designing knaves, griping usurers,

and cuckolds into the bargain. The Cavaliers were always the fine gentlemen; and the Dissenters who were to be abused, were always hypocritical, dissembling rogues, or quaint mischievous fellows. Teague, a notorious rogue, who lived by rapine and plunder, was always a fine gentleman; and he who could not follow Teague in his politics, was a sad fellow and capable of no trust whatever."¹

Powerful as the English Stage was, it was proportionally immoral. Its profanity is positively inconceivable to those who have been accustomed to sit in almost domestic privacy and listen enchanted by the eloquence of a Siddons to sentiments that could not raise a blush on the most virgin modesty, to what befel the chastened love of Juliet, the deep filial affection of Cordelia, and the fatal passion of Ophelia. Various as are the merits and the styles of such writers as Congreve and Wycherley, Vanbrugh and Farquhar, they all agree in their licentiousness. The Elizabethan drama had not been without its blemishes, but it was purity itself, compared with the drama that it preceded. The interest of the dramatist was in truth to be unclean. Loathsomeness was the guarantee of success. A modest dramatist would have been synonymous with a suicide, with a man residing in a garret at the Mint, sharing his mouldy crust with mice, with a washerwoman for a dun and a bailiff for an attendant. "To have drawn a man of probity," wrote Steele in his review of Wycherley's "Country Wife,"² "had been a monster, and a poet had at that time discovered his want of knowledge of the manners of the court he lived in, by a virtuous character in his fine gentleman, as he would show his ignorance by drawing a vicious one to please his present audience." Moroseness was the general bugbear. In

¹ "Chesterfield's Works," vol. 5, pp. 13, 14, 150.

² "Tatler," No. 3.

his play of *Cleomenes*, Dryden for once yielding to the nature of his subject, attributed continency to his principal character. The fact did not pass unnoticed by the critics of the pit. One of them in raillery told the poet, that if he had been in solitude with the lady, he would not have passed his time so churlishly as the Spartan.¹ There was too much geniality of taste and pursuit in the imaginary characters, to shock either those who portrayed them or those who criticized them. Plenty of the fine gentlemen who frequented the Bowling Green or the Cock Pit, and whose drolleries on Tower Hill or at the Cock in Bow Street, would have astonished the more delicate sensibilities of the Fribbles and Maccaronis that amused the analytical skill of Walpole, might have sate for Sir Arthur Addle or Lord Foppington; and even the unique vileness of the Friths, the Mirabels, and Flippants might have found its counterpart in the fine ladies who shook off the last night's debauch in the bazaars of the New Exchange, or in frolicking at the Ring, or the Fairs, in the dress of country lasses, in red petticoats, high-heel pattens and woollen waistcoats.

It was pretended that the *Caroline* drama presented no improprieties more gross than those which defile the pages of Johnson, of Beaumont, of Fletcher, and of Shakspeare. The fine gentlemen of the two dramas afford a fair test. Dryden maintained, that it was impossible for writers, who were not gentlemen themselves, to clothe their characters in the garb of gentlemen. The old poets, he objected, kept low company. It might be questioned whether the frequenters of the Royal Oak, the Mitre, or the Roebuck, in the days of the second Charles, had any right to despise the good company that night upon night filled up the benches of the Mermaid, the Devil, or the Boar, in the days of Queen

¹ "Guardian," No. 45.

Bess or of James ; whether the wit that tickled the fancy and shook the sides of the authors of " Love in a Wood," " The Old Bachelor," " The Confederacy," and " Limberham," was more jovial and less profane than that wit which circulated at the table at which Ben Jonson acted host, and Shakspeare, Beaumont, and Fletcher were among the guests. But the most hasty comparison would decide. Take the men, and contrast the low vulgarity of such sparks as the Wildbloods, the Harcourts, the Horners, the Woodals, the Rhodophils, and Beaugards of the Caroline, with the elegant vivacity of the Mercutios, the Benedics, the Valentines, the Lovelesses, the Truewits and the Clermonts of the Elizabethan dramatists. The same vicious humour appears in the feminine portraits. It is impossible not to appreciate the wide difference of those tastes which imagined, on the one hand, the Cordelias and Portias, the Aspatias, Helenas, and Celanthas, and to which we are indebted on the other for the Frails and Pliants, the Angelicas, Berinthias, and Delindhas. It took nearly a century to eradicate the influence of this cold and heartless licentiousness which displayed itself in the treatment of the sex. The kindlier appreciation of the womanly virtues set on foot by the " Spectator," and which certainly spoke better for the morality of Buttons' than of Wills', did not prevent Pope from exhorting one of his female acquaintance—

" Not to quit the free innocence of life
For the dull glory of a virtuous wife,"

and from further asserting that women " had no character at all ;" a sophisticated dogma which Chesterfield endorsed, when he informed his son, in words worthy the disciple of Rochefoucault, that " they are but children of a larger growth, whom a man of sense only

humours and plays with, but could never dream of consulting or trusting.”¹

None but a cynic, or a critic like Rhymer, would quarrel with the comic dramatists for making such unlimited use of so legitimate an ingredient in the comic drama as Love. The blame may be justly thrown upon them, not for rendering all other topics subordinate to love, but for rendering love subordinate to vice; not for introducing love on the stage, but for introducing it in so filthy an attire. The love of the stage of the Restoration is no more that ethereal thing we are accustomed to see embodied in a Juliet or a Desdemona, than a draped figure is like a naked satyr. The sentiments of the latter love were the sentiments of the Coal Yard, and its language the language of Lewknor Lane. Pictures too gross for the “Decameron” were conveyed in expressions that Rousseau would have erased from his “Héloïse,” and Montaigne would not have admitted into his Essays. Nor was the moral mechanism of the plot without substantial auxiliaries. Among other novel artifices suggested by the ingenuity of the new taste was scenic representation; an artifice carried in a little time to such an excess, that it was agreed by the critics of Addison’s date, that the tailor and painter often contributed more to the success of a tragedy than the poet, and that a well-dressed play had sometimes brought a fuller audience than a well-written one.² Thus, to the fascinations of genius succeeded the fascinations of art. To the language of the lip, was added the still more inflaming language of gesture. Every one has experienced the power which living scenery has, of impressing on the mind of the spectator the sentiments of the play. When declamation has failed, the coldest heart has warmed under its influence. Scenic decoration is to the stage, what dress, complexion, and attitude are

¹ Vol. i, p. 181.

² “Spectator,” No. 24.

to the wax model. It bestows on the most inanimate trope something of the kindred animation of life. It is under its vivifying influence that we crack our sides with Falstaff, shudder with Macbeth, shiver with Lear, and give our little tribute of a tear to the tomb of the Capulets. Bottom, when he calculated that in the garb of despairing Pyramus he could make his audience look to their eyes; Quince, when he guaranteed that Fluke, in a masque, should by his roar be mistaken for Thisbe, or that Smug, as lion, should frighten duchess and ladies into fits—do credit to their knowledge of human nature, if not to their experience in theatrical machinery. A play, be it comedy or tragedy, supported by the paraphernalia of the stage or the wardrobe, is prepared for conquest and empire. The action is assisted by the circumstances of locality. The actors have nature and life on their side. Their mien is aided by their attire, their gestures are realized in their equipage. A piece thus armed and accoutred, is far more powerful than the most elaborate epic. A dozen perusals of such works as “Cain,” or the “Morgante Maggiore,” would not have the effect of a single representation of such a character as “Zaire” or “Dominick.”

I have incidentally compared, as means to an end, the French philosophy and the English drama; I may now add, that what Voltaire was to that philosophy, Dryden was to the drama.

There is no character in English literature which can be investigated with less of satisfaction than Dryden's. The gloomy virulence of Swift may excite our pity or our disgust. The malignity of Pope may shock our benevolence; the unsubdued recklessness of Goldsmith may provoke a gesture of indignation; but none of them summon up those peculiar feelings of irritation with which we are accustomed to contemplate the cold moral insusceptibility of the author of the “Religio

Laïci." One of his satirists called him "forced Bayes." The epithet exactly expresses a life spent in sinning and repenting, in continually protesting against temptation and continually submitting to it.

The career of Dryden commenced as a trimmer. Just fresh from college, he occupied a corresponding place in the household of his cousin, Sir Gilbert Pickering, to that which Swift held in the establishment of Sir William Temple. When Cromwell died, he paid homage to his memory in an ode which, had he never written another line, would have left him a reputation not above Spratt's or Walsh's; and when Cromwell's adumbration had disappeared before the rising sun of Charles, he wrote the "*Astræa Redux*" to Charles's welcome. There is some excuse for his versatility in this instance at least. It may be doubted whether he was ever other than a monarchist at heart; whether, though he may have submitted to dependence on republican relatives, he had ever been deeply imbued with republican principles. It was more likely in his real sentiments he was neutral; that he either did not trouble himself about the matter at all, or that if he did, he was content to maintain the same Laodicean lukewarmness that Dorset maintained, when the House of Orange expelled the House of Stuart. It was not difficult either, for a moderate monarchist, with some little concession, to satisfy his prejudices with what vestiges of royalty Cromwell had created around him. There was very little of the Puritanism of other days left to shock the most delicate sensibility. The difference between living under Cromwell and living under Charles during the subsequent years of Cromwell's reign, was very little greater than the difference between wearing a rosette under a Bourbon, and wearing the tricolour under a Bonaparte. And the prejudices of a young man of five-

and-twenty, of such a temperament as Dryden's, would hardly have been regulated by the Herald's office. The Protectorate was a useful measure in 1657. The Restoration was an equally useful measure in 1660. Many things had rendered it a necessary one. Oliver was dead. His natural successor was incapable. Under such circumstances, even the politician who had consented to the death of the first Charles, if his system of political ethics was a rational one, might have joined his voice to the multitude's in proclaiming the second. His pliancy, indeed, would be equivocal, but it certainly would not be unjustifiable. On the other hand, it must not be overlooked that pecuniary dependence has never yet been considered as a stimulant to independence of principle, and that Dryden's poverty throws a strong suspicion on his tergiversation.

If any importance is to be attached to the satirical hyperbole of Shadwell, that he took up with a lodging no bigger than a pocket-glass, dined at a threepenny ordinary enough to starve a vacation tailor, kept little company, went clad in homely drugget, drank wine as seldom as a Rechabite,—it may be concluded that his privations were not slight. There is another account, which associates him with Herringman, a bookseller in the New Exchange, as a preface writer and occasional drudge. On this account his most recent commentator, Mr. Bell, seems disposed to place but little dependence, to my mind without sufficient reason. That Dryden's means were limited may be seen by his subsequent efforts through life to better them. And it appears to be just as reasonable that he should be a hack to Herringman in his younger days, when he was unknown to fame, as that he should have been the Helot of Jacob Tonson when he could afford to live in Gerard Street, and had a reputation of thirty years' standing to fall back on. His circum-

stances were not quite so destitute, perhaps, as Prior's when Dorset lighted upon him, Horace in hand, in the corner of the Rummer Tavern; but they were, I suspect, very little better than Johnson's, when he took up his abode in Woodstock Street; or Richardson's, when he acted as assistant in Mr. John Wylde's shop at Stationers' Hall. Whatever was his condition, a seat at the newly-instituted Royal Society on the same bench with Chief Justice Hale and Lord Keeper Guildford, obtained through the patronage of Sir Robert Howard, and a marriage into the family of the Earl of Berks, destined to turn out as unhappy as Addison's union with the Countess of Warwick, proved that the change of principle had not been altogether without some advantages.

It is during this period of conjugal misery that his biographer finds another instance of that strange admixture of fickleness of judgment, of subservience of taste, and insensibility of disposition almost amounting to indifference to censure, that stamps with a spurious character all the transactions of his life.

As if through a sort of reaction to the naked grandeur of the "Paradise Lost," the old maxim that had been current in Sir Philip Sidney's time, "that the chief life of modern versifying consisteth in the like sounding of words," had been revived, and a consequent passion for rhyme had invaded the realms of Parnassus on the Restoration. Swift's receipt for making a good poem, to try it as you would sound a pipkin, and if it rings well on the knuckle to be sure there is no flaw in it, seems to have been anticipated. Sidney mentions "rhyming to death, as is said to be done in Ireland;" and it is certain, had he lived a century and a half later, he might have transferred the imputation to England. It had become a fashionable vice, countenanced by such men as Hall in his "Satires," and lasting, with considerable

strength, long enough to gain the consent of such men as Goldsmith and Johnson. One of the few who made a partial stand against the doctrine was Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law. Dryden himself published an essay in direct opposition, wherein he maintained the superiority of rhyme over blank verse with the common arguments in its favour of dignity, distinctness, and emphasis. He did more. He wrote rhyming tragedies, and plainly hinted at the defect of the "Hamlet" and "Othello" in this respect. One step even yet farther he took, unequalled in audacity even by that *beau-esprit* of the middle ages that Addison tells us turned the "Æneid" into rhyme for the sake of energy—he proclaimed his intention to Milton of tagging the "Paradise Lost." This is evidently a mere matter of literary judgment, and the modification of it implies no moral inconsistency. Nevertheless, it is difficult to refrain from seeing a deficiency somewhere—a vitiation of temperament, however slight, when we find Dryden, not long after, ridiculing the opinion he had maintained so urgently, with a self-culpatory emphasis that a wretch like Scarron would have been ashamed to use, openly renouncing his prejudice in a prologue to a play, and with a most hardy forgetfulness of his own sacrilegious attempt, publicly proclaiming that "barbarous nations and more barbarous times debased the majesty of verse to rhymes."

But these trifles are mere mint, annise, and cummin compared to that weightier matter of his conversion to the Romish persuasion, which has cast a shadow across his grave.

In the examination into the sincerity of that conversion great stress has been laid by his enemies on the "Religio Laici." To consider that document, however, as the confession of a conscientious Protestant is absurd.

Its sentiments, indeed, tell more against him than all the events of his life put together ; but their testimony is generally extracted only on a different view. Its chief characteristic is a wholesale denunciation of all sects and of all religions whatever. It expresses the most total adiaphorism. The whole drift of the piece reads as nothing more than a satire, in very bare disguise, upon every denomination of Christians. Heretics and infidels, philosophical Deists, Protestant fathers, Hebrew rabbis, Catholic patriarchs and Catholic councils, Socinians, Presbyterians, Puritans, each and all are made to state their arguments and creeds, and their arguments and creeds are made to appear inconclusive and irreconcilable. At length the climax is reached. The poet ends by ironically admitting the convenience of that argument which had unsettled Chillingworth, namely, that it would be well if a church could be found whose authority might be omnipotent and whose decisions might be infallible :

“ Such an omniscient church we wish indeed.”

In the absence of this desideratum, the argument is followed up by the only consistent conclusion it could have led him to, “ that,” to use the words of Sir Walter Scott, “ the best way is to think as little as possible on the subject”—a species of self-complacency not unlike Ben Jonson’s, when he excused his conversion to Popery with the plea that “ he took the priest’s word.”

“ The unlettered Christian who believes in gross,
Plods on to heaven, and is never at a loss.”

One would almost believe that such a doctrine had been pilfered from the “ Leviathan,” and that its author had imbibed of that fashionable Hobbism that sarcastically said of the mysteries of religion, that “ like pills for the sick, swallowed *whole*, they have the virtue to cure ; but

chewed, they are for the most part cast up without effect." It was, in truth, a metrical ratification of the dogma of St. Augustine: *In dubiis libertas*. The apology for turning Romanist for the sake of those "helps to heaven," as Johnson calls them, and which indeed would have made Johnson himself a Papist, according to his own confession, had not "an obstinate rationality" prevented him, is plainly forestalled by the contempt Dryden expresses for "such brushwood aid" as Pope, Councils, and Tradition.

This method of criticising the poem, and accounting for the principles adapted to it, was no novelty, even at the date of its publication. His enemies need no other words to condemn him than those Sir Walter Scott used to justify him: "It is remarkable that his friends do not seem to have considered the *Religio Laici* as expressive of his decided sentiments; for Charles Blount, a noted free-thinker, *in consequence of this very work*, wrote a Deistical treatise in prose, bearing the same title, and ascribed with great testimony of respect to his most honoured friend, John Dryden, Esquire." It might have been added that *on this very work* the Earl of Roscommon founded a poem, which the reader is left to consider at choice either an impious parody or parallel. "Dryden did not, therefore," adds Sir Walter Scott, in another place, "abandon the Church of England for that of Rome, but was converted to the Catholic Church from a state of infidelity, or rather pyrrhonism." Accordingly, if so lenient a critic as Sir Walter admits that he was an infidel at one time, it is no very harsh judgment that would keep him an infidel at another. If he was a Protestant only for the sake of outward submission—"to my own Church submitting still"—there can be no harm in supposing him a Catholic for the sake of personal convenience. A bad Protestant can suffer no injustice

when he is made a bad Catholic. That his external conformity should plead his Protestantism is no more to be inferred, than it is that Johnson was a Catholic because he prayed for the soul of his wife, and took no sugar in his tea on Fridays. If Dryden confessed, as he did confess in the Preface to this very piece, that he was by nature inclined to scepticism in moral philosophy, it may be reasonably concluded that he would not be naturally disinclined to scepticism in religious philosophy.

Mr. Hallam was of opinion that a man who could reason so well on one side in the *Religio Laici* might have reasoned himself into the sentiments of the "Hind and Panther." That the ratiocination of the former poem expresses anything more than the timorous indecision of a disposition deeply enamoured of the "non licuit," it is difficult to see. On the best construction the excuse would only leave him a rationalist, and it must be confessed that it is far easier to believe in the sincerity of a convert from one extreme to the other—of a convert like Rochester or Count Struensee, than to attach any reality to the conversion or rather the conformity of such a character.

The imputation of scepticism, it will be remembered, was not confined to Dryden. Of those who on the Restoration had trimmed between the excess of heat and the excess of cold, between the torrid zone of Puritanism and the frigid zone of Orthodoxy, numbers had fallen into an atmosphere of philosophic serenity verging on the temperature of "Deism." Such men of fashion as Wilmot and Villiers were after their kind mere idle scoffers of all religion. But even grave statesmen like Mulgrave, Shaftesbury, Temple, and Halifax, were suspected of regarding the mysteries of the faith with very little more of reverence than the courtiers of Julian

regarded the machinery of the Paganism they were engaged in reviving. The men of letters indulged in the same speculative tendencies. To mention only one, Wycherley had been converted from Protestantism to Romanism, back again from Romanism to Protestantism, and reconverted so as to die a Romanist. In the next generation this infidelity spread, and produced at various times such philosophers as Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury, such priests as Atterbury and Swift, and such poets as Garth and the author of the "Essay on Man."

The charge of venal apostacy is not brought against a man whose tenor of life would at once plead his honesty. The opinions of his contemporaries were decidedly against him. Prior, in his imitation of Juvenal's seventh Satire, clearly considers him a renegade. So did Gray. Stillingfleet talked of his changing his religion for bread. The testimony of the town, such as it was represented in Tom Brown or Ned Ward, is worth nothing. Nor was it the only time in his existence that he had been guilty of betraying a very suspicious lukewarmness on subjects on which men are apt to think most, and to have their convictions the strongest. He had been all his life saying or doing something which the next moment compelled him to retract or repent. The tact with which, at the Restoration, he contrived to slip out of one political creed into another, has been already noticed. Every one knows the defects of his Comedies in common with the pieces of the day. In the ode to Mrs. Anne Killigrew, the noblest, says Dr. Johnson, in the language, but which in truth is so full of conceits and extravagance, that Crashaw would not have owned it, occur these lines, the overflowing, apparently, of a conscience inflamed against the sin they decry:—

“ O gracious God ! how far have we
Profaned thy heavenly gift of poesie—
Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,
Debased to each obscene and impious use !
O wretched we ! why were we hurried down
This lubrique and adulterous age,
To increase the streaming ordures of the stage ? ”

This penitential apostrophe was written in 1685. Five years after, “ Don Sebastian ” was brought out, with an Epilogue too coarse to be hinted at. In the satire of “ Absalom and Achitophel ” he constrained his feelings so as to exhibit a phlegmatic indifference alike in punishing his enemies and vindicating his friends. Once, indeed, when Settle and Shadwell were so troublesome as to give him absolute pain, he managed to sharpen his bluntness into indignation, and under the names of Doeg, Og and MacFlecknoe, to do for them, what Boileau was doing for Cotin and Chapelain. Even when his literary vanity was justly wounded, after he had been maltreated by Rochester, after Rochester had out of malice set up Crowne at court, at the expense of his reputation and in defiance of his office, the poet-laureate had the easy good nature, or rather the want of spirit, to tender his services to write an epilogue for the masque of his rival. Is it likely that a man of such a temperament, almost embodying Horace Walpole’s definition of Lord Carteret—a man of no sensations—who never exhibited any particular prejudices, or any particular preferences ; who was considered, by his companions, “ the mildest creature known ; ” who was too languid even to exact any pay from the very tenants who occupied his house, and who was so heedless of his fame as to tell the English people, in his “ Life of Francis Xavier,” how the Apostle of the Indies had raised the dead, how his crucifix had sweated, how a crab had picked up out of the sea the saint’s cross, and a thousand other absurd fabrications,

should have cared much about his theological reputation, or his theological principles? Was it probable that a playwright, who had been bred in a profligate Court, who had led a profligate life, who had employed his youth in ridiculing the religion of his manhood, and who now at the last employed his manhood in ridiculing the religion of his youth, should have been as invulnerable as Andrew Marvel? Is it unreasonable to suspect the courtier, who had written a satire on Romanism when Romanism was in disgrace, and who had become a convert to Romanism when Romanism was on the throne, who composed the "Spanish Friar" in the time of Charles, and the "Hind and Panther" in the time of James? If it is added to this, that Dryden was miserably poor when Charles died and James succeeded—so poor, that the penetrating eye of Hume has detected the effects of hunger and haste even in his "Fables"—that his poverty was increased by his Protestantism, that he could gain nothing by railing at James now; that he might, and actually did, gain a good deal by taking James's part; it must be owned that his detractors have presumptions strong enough almost to produce conviction. Of anything approaching to documentary evidence they have been deprived by Mr. Bell's discovery of an exchequer warrant, bearing date the 6th of May, 1684, and authorizing, together with the payment of four years' salary in arrear, an additional payment of one hundred pounds a year. This transaction must be at once acknowledged to overthrow the common theory which made James the original author of the "Bonus." "It is manifest," says Mr. Bell, "that the extra annuity granted by James was not a new grant, but the resumption of an annuity granted by his predecessor." "The pension," adds that editor, "was resumed on the 4th of March, 1685-6." For a whole year, accordingly, Dryden remained on the original salary

of the laureateship. "The anonymous defence of the Duchess of York's paper, in which Dryden for the first time espoused the doctrines of Rome, appeared *late* in 1686."

I am not disposed to have much sympathy with that species of adjudication, which would pretend to limit the fluctuations and hesitations, which precede and accompany the harrowing throes of a great mind, in its processes of conversion, or change, to the exact chronological epoch of a day or a month. No impartial observer of Dryden's character would be likely to hazard his convictions either for or against him, in such a question, on the conclusion drawn by Mr. Bell, even if that conclusion were drawn from strictly accurate premises, which it is not. The defence of the Duchess of York's paper was not the first time that Dryden, by implication, confessed his apostacy. According to Mr. Bell's own account, a translation of "*Varilla's Heresies*," made by the King's express desire, was entered, for Dryden, at Stationers' Hall, in *April*, 1686. Whether the few weeks that intervened between the date of entry and the date of the resumption of the grant were employed in the contemplation of the subject, there is nothing to show. That Dryden must have been confirmed in his views ere James demanded the translation, is hardly to be disputed; unless, indeed, we split the distinction between the man and the officer, and, as in the case of the Saxon family, where a very good Roman Catholic king may make a very good Protestant Elector, admit that James was content to believe that a Protestant poet possessed the materials for making a Catholic historian.

Independently, however, of such evidence, other inferences, founded on the sure basis of logic and history, tend to suppress any inclination to place a charitable construction on Dryden's motives. It is hardly credible

that James would have bestowed a gratuity where he did not expect an equivalent. His meanness and parsimony had passed into a proverb. Already he had replied to Dryden's appeal for patronage and assistance, by cutting him out of his annual butt of sack. That he should suddenly bestow his bounty on the man whom he had robbed of his right, without some sordid hope of requital, is too ungenial to his character to be received. Dryden, it is well known, had given serious offence to James by caricaturing his religion. What voluntary inducement James had to purchase an enemy, to repay insult with a pension, is not easy to conjecture. Why James should have refused the grant at one time, and conceded it after the expiration of a year, passes my comprehension. The excuse that the list of Charles's pensioners was too formidable a document to be considered in less time, is not worth a moment's consideration. If it did not take a month to retract a perquisite, it surely need not have taken twelve months to confer a favour. The truth seems to be, Dryden found it hard to live out of the atmosphere of the Court. His needy pen needed patronage. His abilities were such that they could not have escaped the eye of James, who was at that moment in want of a champion to defend his faith against the faith of Stillingfleet and Burnet. The result was, the poet was compelled to submit to the same fate that many, equally great, received at the hands of the same master. Father Saunders had been sent to him, and had found him less obdurate than Doctor Radcliffe.¹ Or he had been closeted with James, just as Lobb, Howe, Baxter,

¹ Dr. Radcliffe thus writes in reply to one of the numerous missionaries sent to corrupt him :—"You mistake in considering my opinions more biassed than the generality of mankind. I had one of your new convert's poems in my hands just now. You know them to be Mr. Dryden's, and on what occasion they were written," &c.

and Kiffin were after him ; and he had fallen, just as Lobb and others were doomed to fall. He consented to write for the creed which he had abused, and among the firstfruits of his consent had been "Varilla's Heresies."

The steadfastness with which he adhered to his religion after the patronage of James was arrested by the succession of William, proves nothing. The most hardened villain has some compunction. No man would betray a first error by a second. Few men, even more obtuse than Dryden, would be renegades twice in their lives. Added to this, it was not at all certain that James's expulsion was a final one ; that William would not occupy an episodical page in English history, as Cromwell had done before him. There were plenty of circumstances occurring around to justify such a conclusion. The political horizon was dark with omens of ill for the usurper. Loyal fingers still squeezed the symbolic orange in the chocolate-houses of St. James's, and loyal lips still toasted the King over the Water ; while hearts beat high with the hope that James would return to cherish his own again. "If such an event should occur, then," reasoned Dryden, "it must occur soon for my benefit. If it is not to occur, then the infirmities of age will soon put me beyond the necessity of needing it." And the explanation is in some degree countenanced by the poet's refusing to take the oaths. He would not commit himself with the new king, that he might not forfeit the favour of the old. By this course he saved his reputation, and eventually might save his salary.

It affords a certain relief to turn from Dryden the Laureate to Dryden the Poet. The "Hind and Panther," critically speaking, offers as good a sample of his poetical attainments as could be found. Its peculiarities have

made it familiar to most readers of poetry, where its intrinsic merits would have failed. It is a clear account in verse of the differences which separate the Church of England from the Church of Rome, and a charitable attempt at reconciling these differences. The Church of Rome is represented under a similitude borrowed, I conjecture, from the poem of Solomon, a milk-white hind, doomed or condemned to death, yet fated not to die. The Church of England is symbolized by the panther, the finest creature of the spotted kind, too good to be a beast of prey. The destruction of the hind is the object of the beasts of the field: the Atheistical ape, the Anabaptist boar, the Unitarian fox, the Presbyterian wolf, the Independent bear;—her only defence the kingly guardianship of the British lion. The chief characteristic of the piece is the united appeal it makes to the imagination and the reason, and the curiosity which the treatment of an ecclesiastical disquisition, more adapted to the province of a Bellarmin or a Chillingworth, in a poetic dress, naturally excites. Its chief praise is that it possesses as little poetical extravagance as possible, and as much poetical harmony as logic is capable of, that the expressions of the poet are as musical as the thoughts of the philosopher will allow. The chief defect, on the other hand, is in the machinery. The media of communication are wholly disproportioned to the importance of the subject. The conductors, so to speak, are too insignificant to suit the importance of the sentiments they are intended to convey. To borrow the sarcasm of Goldsmith, “the little fishes are made to talk too much like whales.” “A fable,” says Dr. Johnson, “which exhibits two beasts talking theology, appears at once full of absurdity.” “The absurdity of the plan,” repeats Lord Macaulay, “is obvious.” The wits of the day were so much amused at the idea, that they jeeringly assigned

the circulation of the poem among band-boxes, the waste-paper baskets of coffee-houses, the factory departments of trunk-makers' shops, and the parcel-rooms of Chancery Lane. Two of them, Prior and Montague, whom Dryden in the day of his sovereignty had often distinguished kindly among the novices who crowded round his arm-chair in the balcony at Wills', put their heads together, and produced a travestie entitled, "The City Mouse and Country Mouse." The plot, it is true, was sufficiently open to banter, but it may be doubted whether such unmitigated condemnation is perfectly justifiable. The question would be, not whether Dryden's fable is unreasonable, but whether any zoological fable is reasonable? It is evident a hind cannot talk; but if the laws of fiction allow it to talk in one place, it is no transgression of those laws for it to talk in another. What the subject of its conversation may be, as far as affecting the realization of the metaphor is concerned, is very little to the purpose. It does not at all influence the fictitiousness of the allegory that the animal talks in syllables and dissyllables on one occasion and uses trisyllables and polysyllables on another. No sensible person's imagination is likely to be beguiled, more or less, because it employs the language of the nursery in *La Fontaine* or *Pilpay*, and makes use of the language of *Rheims* or *Douay* in Dryden. A child would hardly be seduced into the belief that a fox could talk, because it discusses the inconvenience of tails, instead of holding a dialogue on the subject of transubstantiation and papal infallibility. It might not be possible to exculpate Dryden from the charge of exaggeration, or the injudicious extension of allegorical licence; but it would be easy to show that after all the charge is founded, not on the general laws of criticism, such as those which regulate the flights of the poet, but on the unsettled

principles of an irrational predilection. It should seem in reality, that the author of "The Hind and Panther" was as authorized to dictate the quality of his animals' colloquial powers, as the author of "Gulliver's Travels" was to prescribe the dimensions of his men's statures, or the length of their lives.

After all, what critics have denominated the grotesqueness of the fable, may have shown the art of the fabulist. Dryden was too keen an observer of the world not to know that the wit of a dialogue has often fallen martyr to the dulness of a plot. Instead, therefore, of adopting a familiar method, he devised an expedient entirely novel. Instead of a conversation between a good-humoured priest and an inflammable parson, in Chaucer's manner, we have a dialogue between a gentle Hind and surly Panther. The policy of his choice in adopting the hind for the type of his Church must not be overlooked. By this representation he exhibited her, not in the glory of dominion, but with the humility of subjection. By making her simple, weak, and persecuted, he appealed to the sympathy of opponents chivalrously quick to succour the helpless and avenge the oppressed. In taking away from her strength, he diminished her weakness; and when he made her harmless, he made her seductive.

The learning infused into "The Hind and Panther," bespeaks its author's principal poetical defect, the excess of the intellectual element, to the disparagement of the fancy. Throughout his life the reasoning faculty predominated to a prejudicial degree. This was, doubtless, owing a good deal to the education it had received, and to the crisis in poetical literature in which his lot had been cast.

The extinction of chivalry, and the decay of the Provençal, had bequeathed to Europe a corrupt and

degenerate code of embellishment, whose peculiarity, nurtured in the parliaments of Love, consisted in expressing hyperbolical passions in hyperbolical sentiments and language. It is to this root that is to be traced that vicious style, reproved by the muse of "Filicaja," and designated by Boileau as "*cliquant*," which produced the solemn triflings of the Seicentisti and Petrarchisti in Italy, flourished under the name of Cultismo in Spain, and under the protection of the Pleiades in France, developed itself finally in that *style précieuse*, which has ennobled Molière, and for ever degraded the fair inmates of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. For the morbid appearance of these conceits in English literature, Dr. Johnson holds Marini responsible. But it is certain that, long before the time of either Marini or Achellini, the taste for undue ornament may be traced by the antiquarian in the pages of Surrey, Wyatt, and Chaucer, and in the fugitive pieces prior to Chaucer. In Elizabeth's reign the plague became systematized, and the beauty who had not been a scholar of Lily, or could not parley Euphuism, could not hope for a smile or a tap on the cheek from the Royal pupil of Ascham. Nor was it otherwise than congenial at the Court of the monarch whose fondness for a good quibble was far more notorious than his fondness for a good sermon, and whose goodwill was purchasable by any lawned priest or privy councillor that had his quirk or conundrum in readiness for the pulpit or the bench. The absurdity of this "new English" can still raise a smile in the caricature Shakespeare has left of it in his Don Adriano de Armado, and Scott in his Sir Pierce Shafton. Its peculiar features are to this day easily portrayed. Poetry, under its influence, ceased to be alluring, and became laborious. False sentiment was overloaded with false wit. Verse became the vehicle not of affording pleasure, but of

displaying learning. Alliterations, puns, forced conceits, bombastic allusions, heterogeneous ideas violently associated, abstruse illustrations, curious contrasts, hyperbolic comparisons, familiar conceptions clothed in monstrous ambiguities, natural phenomena spoiled by unnatural combinations: all these features may be distinguished by any one who will be at the pains to glance at the works of Cowley, Donne, and Crashaw, or at Johnson's criticism on them.¹ Under this incongruous system the dignity of the grandest figure was made ridiculous by the worthlessness of its ornaments. Hence, the poets excited ridicule where they meant to extract admiration. We feel disposed to regard them as we would regard a Patagonian, whose splendid limbs are decked out in glass beads and metal buttons, and we forget the natural grandeur of his structure in wondering at the grotesqueness of his costume. In perusing their works, we are reminded, against our will, of the Doctor's feast in Smollett's "Peregrine Pickle." There are birds no rarer than a goose or a barn-door fowl, but they are so disguised in pepper, lovage, coriander, oil, mint, rue, and assafoetida, that we lose at once all taste for the meat and all relish for the condiment. Nor is the superabundance of the article any apology for its rankness. Their imagination keeps a perpetual feast, their wit holds a continual carnival. They missed the golden mean between gratifying the readers' taste and disgusting them with repletion. Nausea, at length, supervenes. What one's stomach cannot digest, one's appetite loathes. The result is, we are compelled to treat their generosity as

¹ There is an ingenious criticism on the vices of Euphuism in the 62nd Number of the "Spectator,"—a paper which one would have been disposed to think Johnson had seen before writing his review of Cowley's works, had he not, in a letter published for the first time in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1784, erroneously declared that Cowley had never received any critical examination.

Johnson, by way of reproof to his extravagance, treated poor Goldsmith's third course, refrain from tasting it.

It was this taint that Dryden inherited, and though there is a vast difference between his earlier pieces and his later, between his "*Astræa Redux*" and his "*Britannia Rediviva*," yet the infection clung to him from first to last. His definition of wit, as "a propriety of words and thoughts adapted to the subject," and which, as Addison observed, would have made Euclid the greatest wit that ever put pen to paper, was likely to mislead him. Accordingly, in all his congratulatory poems, in those pieces which appeal rather to the feelings than the intellect, the effects of his erroneous theory appear continually in the form of a most offensive association of congruities and resemblances. The feature will explain itself best by exemplification, and the best example is the ode already cited, the "*Britannia Rediviva*." The subject of it is characteristic of the period, the birth of the Pretender. The images employed in it are ecstatic enough to have gratified the most vitiated moments of Martial or Ovid. There is scarcely an expression which a reader of poetry would not wish to see expunged. Sometimes the babe, the innocent object of the rhapsody, is a pagan divinity; sometimes he is a Christian divinity. Sometimes he is compared to the infant Child of Bethlehem, sometimes to the God whom Crete refused to hold. Sometimes he is a heathen hero, sometimes a mediæval prince; sometimes he is Henry, sometimes Edward, sometimes Richard. At one moment he is the manna, the celestial bread, at another Moses himself. Now he is drawn down by holy violence from heaven to make us Englishmen again, now he is deposited in a sacred cradle and delivered over to the keeping of seraphs with strict orders to take possession and secure the line, and to beware of the republican dragon in particular,

and republicans in general, who are sometimes snakes with forked tongues, and sometimes Jews. The only sentiment in it which most people would be disposed to endorse, is the confession of its author,

“That the furious transport of the news
Had to prophetic madness fired the muse—
Madness ungovernable, uninspired.”

And yet it is to this muse we are indebted for the Fables, the “Ode to St. Cecilia” and the “Alexander’s Feast.”

It is, however, this remarkable inequality in the works of Dryden, individually and collectively, which must strike every one who passes from his panegyric on Lord Hastings to his “Medal,” and from his “Annus Mirabilis” to his “Absalom and Achitophel.” Some one has said: “I have seen Tintoret now equal to Titian, now less than Tintoret.” In tracking Dryden from his chrysalis state through all his gradations to the full expansion of the perfect man, the same reflection suggests itself at every step.

In his versification the contempt of regularity amounts to an absolute blemish. Lines half finished precede lines with two or three syllables to spare. A rude sentiment prolonged in a gigantic Alexandrine jostles the delicate sweetness of its neighbour, and a slovenly figure inserted at hazard destroys the beauty of a trope that agrees as ill with it as

“Sappho’s diamonds with her dirty smock.”

His muse indeed was graphically said to put on soiled linen with her diamonds. Dryden, in fact, wanted a little of that quality of which Pope possessed too much. He despised the labour of the file, and preferred robust rudeness to polished grace.

Measuring his satires by the exaggerated fulsomeness of his panegyrics, a casual observer, ignorant of his real nature, would probably conjecture them to be the most

virulent in the language. But they are, in fact, the most temperate. His adulation is as flagrant as his abuse is gentle. His shafts are never winged with the fire of implacable resentment. Like the fury of Armida in the act of drawing her bow on Rinaldo, there is a mingled expression of reluctance that would almost seem to ask

“That all its vehemence be spent in air.”

In his “Medal,” there is none of that violent personality which the author of the “Dunciad” inflicted on his victims. In consequence of this moderation, his political satires read more like pamphlets, and pamphlets far more impartial than some of Dean Swift’s. Owing to the different feelings with which he took up his pen to blame or to praise, and the great contrast in the emphasis he bestowed in his censure and his encomium, the historical impartiality of his portraits is confined but to one half of them. Few for instance would be able to acknowledge in the Godlike David, with his “native mercy,” his “clemency,” his “tenderness of blood,” and his “manly temper,” the effigy of that monarch who cheated his tradesmen to enrich his concubines, sold his country for gold, slit his subjects’ noses, and cut off his councillors’ heads. On the other hand, in analyzing his characters, it must be observed, Dryden differed from the old school of Satirists as a skilful anatomist differs from a butcher. In dissecting his subjects, he is careful that he does not mawl them. He kills his victims, so to speak, according to rule. His delineations accordingly are as much superior to the grotesque combinations of Butler, as the productions of a scientific caricaturist are to the slate drawings of a child. All his men are human beings, not Chinese figures. It would be easy to illustrate this peculiar skill of his, in keeping rigidly on this side burlesque, by a reference to the character of his Achitophel.

An unexperienced hand might have expected that the poet would not have spared his calumniating powers in describing Shaftesbury. But no such thing. There is no exaggeration of malice. He is represented as no extraordinary monster. Cicero's portrait of Cataline is hyperbole in comparison. So is Sallust's. Those who rise from contemplating Butler's portrait of the same individual will be amazed at the contrast. In Dryden's, we look in vain for the wretch we are accustomed to see in Butler's delineation. In Dryden's, we can find no "bell-wether," no "old canting wizard," no "subtle baffler of the law," no "fatal firebrand," no "abomination." He is neither "hell's journeyman," nor "rebel," nor the "cacofage of the age," nor "the Sanford of the public stage," nor "the quintessence of all that's naught," nor "the broacher of schism." Nor do we recognize that "the devil's in him," or that he is "the tap of devilism," or that "treason, like dropsy humours, flows out of him," or yet that "he's too cunning to be caught," or that "he loves the rump with all his gizzard."

On the contrary, in "Achitophel" we have no incarnation of iniquity, no creature altogether abominable, to whom Cethagus or Clodius would have been as angels of light, but simply a man whose ambition had overtopped his prudence; a "restless, bold, and turbulent statesman;" a statesman of the tribe of the Wolseys, the Essexes, and Lauds, and by no means the worst of his tribe. Added to this, in the opposite balance, we have a judge unbribed, unsought, swift of despatch, and easy of access. The whole portrait together makes up nothing more terrible than a courtier as giddy as Sunderland, and a judge less venial than Bacon. Nor is this impartiality without its policy. In extenuating nought and setting down nought in malice, in preserving all the lights and shades of character common to human

nature, he has insured at once the attention and the sympathy of the reader. It is by these alternate changes, by this subtle mixture of good and evil, of candour and deceit, of vice and virtue, of laudable traits and damnable propensities, by the very inconsistency, in a word, that he has succeeded in satirizing the original. Nothing is more contemptible in the minor satirists than the habit of creating an image, embodying in it all the deadly sins, as the Hindoos do their Rhudderi, or the Persians their Arimanes, and calling it, Man.¹

It is, perhaps, one of the principal ingredients in Milton's success, that in drawing his portraits he did not make his imagination body forth the form of things unknown. His moderation is a happy one. By not personifying his characters with the minuteness of Dante, he has avoided the ill effects of familiarity. By imparting to them, nevertheless, a human signification, he took the best means of ensuring human sympathy. By enduing the abstract with the qualities of the concrete, though with no definite forms; by giving to his spirits "head, eye, ear, intellect, sense," and attributing to them "colour, shape, and size," he reaches not only the head but the heart of the spectator. The representation becomes so vivid, that the spectator not only comprehends but feels. It is remarkable how Milton's anxiety to avoid the common imputation of having exaggerated the fiendish character of his fiends, shows itself wherever it reasonably can—to such an extent, indeed, as to lead Arnold to reject his Satan for the Mephistopheles. Thus, in speaking of the loyalty of Satan's subjects, he writes:—

"For neither do the spirits damned,
Lose all their virtue."

¹ His connection with Lord Shaftesbury, I conjecture, accounts for his favourable view of him. Shaftesbury had married one daughter of Lord Spencer, and Dryden's brother-in-law had married another.

And again, when some of the Stygian seraphim sing,—

“The harmony—
—What could it less, when spirits immortal sing?—
Suspended hell, and took with ravishment
The thronging audience.”

In losing heaven, an ordinary poet would have made such subjects lose all their heavenly attributes.

As Milton's name has been mentioned in connection with Dryden's, it may be perhaps allowed to indulge in a little critical conjecture which concerns both.

No one who has read the “Paradise Lost,” and the “Absalom and Achitophel,” with attention or consecutively, can well have helped observing the intense likeness of language and of sentiment that pervades certain portions of the two. It would not be a hard matter to search out single features which Milton has ascribed to one or other of the Stygian conclave, and which, put together, should form the portrait of Dryden's “Achitophel.” Satan's half-penitent soliloquy, and the latter part of Absalom's first reply to the tempter, have much in common. But here is a coincidence that with some critics would pass for a plagiarism. The first extract is taken from Satan's awful apostrophe to the deity, one of the most splendid pieces of that splendid composition:—

“Oh! had his powerful destiny ordained
Me some inferior angel, I had stood
Then happy: no unbounded hope had raised
Ambition—”

Dryden says of Absalom—

“Unblamed of life, ambition set aside,
Not stained with cruelty, not puff'd with pride.
How happy had he been, if destiny
Had higher placed his birth, or not so high.”

The similarity is, to say the least, singular, and when it is remembered that Dryden had always candidly re-

echoed Marvel's admiration of Milton, that he viewed his poem with the eye of a critic, and that he formed one of his own poems on the "Paradise Lost," the coincidence may not be altogether unaccountable.

Dr. Johnson has taken upon himself to find fault with the abrupt termination of the "Absalom and Achitophel." "Who can forbear to think of an enchanted castle," he writes "with a wide moat and lofty battlements, walls of marble and gates of brass, which vanish at once into air when the destined knight blows his horn before it?" It is curious that a scheme so obvious should have required comment. Some critics have laboriously endeavoured to vindicate Dryden from Johnson's censure, on the ground that the poem is not a romance, and that the author of the poem was consequently not governed by the laws that regulate romantic compositions. Others, more reasonably, have maintained that the sudden conclusion of his story was not purely gratuitous; that the author, writing on historical subjects, was compelled to bound his imagination by the present, and, shunning conjecture, to keep to fact. The truth is, however, Dryden himself solved the problem when he wrote in his preface, "Who knows but the reconciliation of Absalom and David may yet come to pass? Things were not brought to an extremity when I left the story. There seems room left yet for composure. The devil himself may be saved. The true end of satire, is the amendment of vice by correction."

"He durst not then too deeply probe the wound,
As hoping still the nobler parts were sound;
But strove with anodynes to assuage the smart,
And mildly thus his medicines did impart."

By not painting Absalom as irrecoverably lost, he left him grounds for penitence and for hope. By delicately drawing the veil of concealment over the future, by leaving his portrait half drawn, he stimulated his repentance by

palliating his crimes. The effect of the religious nomenclature was curious. The names of Absalom and Achitophel became the popular aliases for the court. The wits and parsons especially, made capital of the title. For some time broadsheets and sermons, full of pointed adaptations from the story of Samuel, issued from coffee-house and pulpit. Answers and counter-satires came from the Whig pamphleteers in abundance. For months the town was deluged with reflections on the author of "Absalom and Achitophel," with ironical panegyrics on the author of "Absalom and Achitophel." One piece entitled the "Whip and Key," and written by a Non-conformist minister, exposed Dryden's "Allegory," by a reference to the meaning of the Hebrew names. Absalom, it was said, meant "brother of a fool." "In that case," retorted Dryden, "I give up my claim. The author of the 'Whip and Key' must pass undisputed for the next of kin." The sale of the piece was extensive. Johnson's father, then a country bookseller, told his distinguished son that he had not known it equalled by anything, except Sacheverel's trial.

Apropos of the "Absalom and Achitophel," it is interesting to notice the controversial, the political, what he himself calls the legislative aspect of many of Dryden's chief pieces. It will be demonstrated in the succeeding chapter, how it was that poetry assumed the guise of pamphleteering, and how it was that, in its early stage, pamphleteering was initiated in the form of poetry. At present, it is enough to say, that fully to appreciate Dryden as an author, it is necessary to be fully acquainted with the history of his times. It is not one of the least characteristics of those times, that statecraft absorbed every branch of polite literature, even the drama. Some of Dryden's plays, for instance, are really dramatic pamphlets, and would a few years later have

astonished the politicians that appropriated Addison's "Cato." They abound in special pleading, in court doctrines, and personified theories. Some of the allusions inserted with this aim were destined to be interpreted in a very different sense. Some time after the accession of William, for example, the king and queen were present at the theatre; the choice of the play was the "Spanish Fryar." No choice could have been more unlucky, as it happened, the "Spanish Fryar" abounding in allusions which could not fail to be applied. In one place a spectator observes of the Queen of Arragon, represented in the procession, "she usurps the throne, keeps the old king in prison, and at the same time is praying for a blessing on her army." And elsewhere, "Can I sooth tyranny, seem pleased to see my royal master murdered, his crown usurped, a distaff on the throne? And what title has the queen, but lawless force? and force it is that must pull her down." The poor queen was at her wits' end. Her conduct had always been regarded with a scarce suppressed moral mistrust even by her partizans. The whole audience now witnessed her chagrin. In vain she put her fan to her face, affected indifference, called for her palatine and hood that had never been mislaid. The pit turned their heads over their shoulders, and it may easily be imagined that more than one Tory saw in the discomfiture of the queen, the punishment, if not the penitence, of the daughter.¹

The contrast in the unpolitical character of the old drama, is not a little remarkable; Gifford has endeavoured to prove that Massinger was a Roman Catholic, as Colley Cibber had endeavoured to prove of Shakspeare. But the truth is, the personality at stake is not sufficient to identify either author. The neutrality, in the writings of Shak-

¹ "Dalrymple's Mem.," vol. iii. p. 88; Letter of the Earl of Nottingham.

speare especially, is sufficiently shown by the variety of judgments passed on him. Thus Warburton attempts to demonstrate him to be a Whig; while Hume, on the contrary, can see no love of liberty in him. Warburton's ingenuity is marvellous in this respect. One of his letters to Birch fairly converts the "Midsummer Night's Dream" into an elaborate political allegory. The Dolphin is the Dauphine, the Mermaid is Mary of Scotland. Her dulcet breath refers to Mary's Latin Oration in the Louvre; certain stars, to the various matches proposed to her, more particularly the Duke of Norfolk. On some such principle, I suppose, we find a mention in Stevens' "Percy Correspondence," of a clergyman writing a pamphlet to prove that the character of Hamlet was intended for James I., and the Ghost for Lord Darnley.¹ The revival of Shakspeare at the Hanoverian accession, seems to have roused the ingenuity of these quasi-political commentators. When "Richard II." was restored at Covent Garden, in 1738, Haynes, the then printer of the "Craftsman," was prosecuted for writing a letter full of political applications from the play to Walpole. The play seems to have been a favourite on this score. The dialogue of Northumberland and his friends, is especially referred to by Davies,² as furnishing rare material for innuendo. The words, "The King is not himself, but basely led by flatterers," were always the signal for clapping of hands and clattering of sticks, and when the actor said—

"The Earl of Wiltshire hath the State in farm,"

the cries of Walpole, and the shouting and huzzaing, reached their height. Wolsey again on the revival of "Henry VIII." was invariably applied to Walpole.

To return to Dryden. The "Essay on Satire" comes

¹ "Nichol's Illustrations," vol. vii. p. 23.

² "Dramatic Anecdotes," vol. i. p. 153.

nearest to our usual conception of satire, such as it is generally associated with the "Rolliad" and the "Dunciad." It is chiefly read as one of the few poetical assaults which have procured their authors the reward of a personal chastisement, and as having up to this moment identified the name of the capricious Earl of Rochester with "Black Will and his Cudgel." There is a question connected with its authorship which still keeps up an interest in it, and which from time to time has created as much controversy as the authorship of the "Epistles of Phalaris." Malone considers that Mulgrave wrote it and Dryden corrected it. Johnson, in his life of Mulgrave, maintains a timid neutrality. In his life of Dryden he unhesitatingly ascribes it to Mulgrave alone. Dean Lockier, on his part, confidently gives it to Dryden. Sir Walter Scott is very positive on the other side. "The versification of the poem," he asserts, "is as flat and inharmonious as the plan is careless and ill-arranged." Nor does he think that any portion of the Essay received revision from Dryden's pen. "Dryden's verses would have shone among Mulgrave's as gold among copper. The whole Essay is a stagnant level, no one part of it rising above the rest as to speak the work of a superior hand. The thoughts when conceived with spirit are unhappily brought out." This criticism seems hardly in unison with Sir Walter's usual fairness. The "Essay on Satire" is not so brilliant as the "Absalom and Achitophel," nor from its characteristic simplicity of plot could it well have been. But neither is it totally flat and devoid of music. The lines on Algernon Sydney's brother, "The Little Lad," are far too coarse and felicitous for the languid muse of Mulgrave. The other objection urged by Sir Walter, that Dryden's subsequent position with the king was inconsistent with the harsh treatment that monarch

undergoes in the course of the piece, is plainly forestalled by Rochester's voluntary confession that Charles had perused the libel, and was in no way displeased with his share. Added to this, Dryden might have been anxious to confirm Mulgrave's regard by punishing Mulgrave's enemies, and among those enemies, Sir Walter himself tells us, Charles then was.

Those who know anything of the wretched morality of literary men during that wretched period, will easily call to mind the peculiar position which patrons held towards their clients, and the reputation which Rochester in particular held among patrons. He had set up for the Richelieu of the age, or rather had arrogated to himself among wits the same pre-eminence that Warwick did among kings. Rochester had quarrelled with Mulgrave. The latter had posted him as a coward, and seduced Dryden from his allegiance to him. Rochester in revenge had procured a play of the notorious Elkanah Settle the honour of a representation at Court. The "Empress of Morocco" was acted at Whitehall, and a prologue, written for it by Rochester, was spoken for it by Lady Howard. The printer, relying upon the popular prejudice, had adorned it with cuts, and allotted its price at two shillings. Settle, astonished at his success, began to grow insolent, and Dryden to grow envious. The latter, in conjunction with Shadwell and Crowne, meditated revenge, and was on the point of losing his power by losing his self-composure, when Rochester interfered by demolishing Settle's dignity. Another puppet was set up. Crowne succeeded to Elkanah, and a little time after Otway took the place of Crowne. If the Essay accordingly be considered as the work of Dryden, these circumstances give some meaning to the following lines, and invest them with a personal significance which, if they were written by Mulgrave, they certainly cannot

have. They are, on this principle of explanation, a jealous remonstrance against the fickleness of that royal friendship, and the indiscrimination of that public taste, which, by thus patronizing the plays of Settle and Crowne, had permitted their authors to usurp Dryden's rights.

" 'Tis being devout at play, wise at a ball,
Or bringing wit and friendship to Whitehall.
But with sharp eyes those nicer faults to find,
Which lie obscurely in the nicest mind—
That little spark which all the rest doth foil,
To wipe off that would be a noble toil,
Beyond the *loose writ libels* of this age,
Or the *forced scenes of a declining stage*;
Above all censure, too, *each little wit*
Will be so glad to see the greater hit."

The same idea, which would seem to reflect on the recent publication of a libel by Rochester, occurs in the preface to his "All for Love." "The case is hard with writers. If they succeed not, they must starve. If they do, some malicious satire is prepared to level them, for daring to please without the leave of the rich."

But the "Essay on Satire" affords other and internal evidence. Compare the sentiments contained in the following lines with that contemptuous good-nature that dictated this sentence to Luke Milbourne: "Let him be satisfied he shall not force himself upon me as an adversary. I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him."

"In this alone methinks the antients erred
Against the grossest follies they declaim—
Hard they pursue, but hunt ignoble game.
Nothing is easier than such blots to hit,
And 'tis the talent of each vulgar wit;
Besides, 'tis labour lost, for who would preach
Morals to Armstrong, or dull Aston teach?"

The coincidence of thought and expression in this and other poems of Dryden are remarkable. Under the character of Rochester we have him called—

“A very Killigrew without good-nature,
For what a Bessus has he always lived.”

A parallel use of the name, borrowed apparently from Beaumont's and Fletcher's play of “A King, no King,” occurs in the address to Lee in his “Alexander:”—

“And as cheap penn'orths to ourselves afford
As Bessus and the Brother of the Sword.”

Dryden's opinions on matrimony would have gratified Euripides and are well known. Compare the two following passages. The first forms the opening of the “Absalom and Achitophel.” The second is pointed at Dorset in the Satire:—

“In pious times, ere priesthood did begin,
Before polygamy was made a sin,
When man on many multiplied his kind,
Ere one to one was *cursedly* confined.”

“Thus Dorset, married, lugged about the matrimonial load,
Till Fortune, blindly kind as well as he,
Has ill *restored him to his liberty*.”

Mulgrave is thus spoken of, or, if we are to consider him capable of realizing the absurdity of Brantom's hero, who is made to laugh at himself and was in consequence laughed at by Warton, thus speaks of himself:—

“After all his vulgar marriage mocks,
With beauty dazzled, *Mumps was in the stocks*.”

The likeness which the Shaftesbury of the Essay bears to the Achitophel of the Satire is so obvious that any reader of ordinary penetration could adduce half a dozen passages.

Shaftesbury is—

“Our little Machiavel,
His limbs are crooked, and his body shakes,
Yet his hard mind, which all this trouble makes,
No pity of its poor companion takes.”

Achitophel is—

“A fiery soul, which worketh out its way,
Fretteth the pigmy body to decay,
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.”

In the Essay, Shaftesbury is made to—

“Quit his dear ease, some deep design to lay.”

Achitophel is—

“Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease.”

In the Essay, Shaftesbury will—

“——laugh at his best friends.”

Achitophel is—

“In friendship false, implacable in hate.”

Achitophel does—

“Refuse his age the needful hours of rest,
Punish a body which he could not please.”

In Shaftesbury—

“’Twere crime in any man but him alone,
To use a body so, though ’tis one’s own.”

One more parallel shall be adduced. Dryden, in speaking of Shaftesbury’s fickleness and impetuosity, makes use of this domestic image :—

“So cat, transformed, sate gravely and demure,
Till mouse appeared, and thought himself secure.
But soon the lady had him in her eye,
And on her friend did just as oddly fly.”

Achitophel, in stimulating the flagging energies of Absalom, thus paints the character of his rival :—

“He meditates revenge who least complains,
And like a lion slumbering in the way,
Or sleep dissembling, while he waits his prey,
His fearless foes within his distance draws,
Constrains his roaring and contracts his paws,
Till in the last, in time for fury found,
He shoots with sudden vengeance from the ground.”

It only remains to be added that the general testimony of his contemporaries assigns the authorship of this piece to Dryden, that it is printed among the State Poems as

his, that an answer was made to it on the same conjecture, and that Narcissus Luttrell tells us that he was beaten by three fellows by order of the Duchess of Portsmouth,—such is his origin of the catastrophe,—for the abuse she received in it.¹

There is one element in his personal satires which redound to his merit—their comparative decency. There is nothing more illustrative of the current demoralization than the state of the satiric muse. Even the common subjects of theological discussion were bereft of ordinary reverence, and opponents ridiculed their neighbours in language compared to which the “*Smectymnæus*” is holyday speech, and in pamphlets whose very titles steam with a vapour too nauseous even for the author of “*The Tale of a Tub*.” Some one, indeed, was wanting to do for the satirists what Collier had done for the dramatists of the day. Witness, for instance, the Fescennine indecency of such collections as the *State Poems*. The usage of the King is perhaps one of the most remarkable features to a generation only acquainted with the milder freedom of a *Lousiad*, or to those who recollect what guerdon a troubadour, who might chance to take too much liberty with the dignity of a Henry the First, received. Nor did his deficiency in this respect impair the efficacy of Dryden’s satires. They can never be considered as racy, light, and epigrammatic as Pope’s. Such a style would not, indeed, have been congenial to the gravity of all his subjects. His manner, on the whole, may be described as striking the balance between the cold animation of Pope, and the severe sententiousness of Johnson. The distaste for polish led him not unfrequently into rugged informalities totally unworthy of him. But he made up at the end in the energy of the stroke for the bluntness of the metal.

¹ “*Diary*,” vol. i. p. 30.

The satire of Pope—to follow up the metaphor—bore the same proportion to the satire of Dryden, that the sword of Solyman does to the sword of Cœur de Lion. As far as appearance goes, the odds are in favour of the glittering Damascus blade and the subtle dexterity of the Mussulman. But, in the contest, it is found that the more homely weapon of the Christian Knight compensated for its rusticity by its temper, and the power of the arm that wielded it. It could not split a hair, but it could sever a bar of iron.

The irregular and vacillating outline which bounds the character of Dryden, would rather suggest a subordination of taste to conventional standard, than any want of originality. The ostrich-flight of his career, the convulsive anxiety to quit the low level to which habit and association confined him, indicates that if he was not allowed to mount the bold heights of a reformer, it was not altogether from a deficiency of inclination. On one occasion in particular, he did violence to his bonds, and showed a liberality worthy of all mention.

Charles the Second, among other foreign innovations, had encouraged the importation of French models to an excess that did not escape the satirists of the day. The pulvilios, essences, and Chadreux perruques, are still remembered by the fierce denunciations of Oldham and Butler. Even so late as the "Spectator," the effects of the peace with France in introducing such French fopperies as valets de chambre and patches, and such French terms as *defiles*, *marauding*, *corps*, and *carte blanche*, were gravely debated by Addison in two of his most pleasant lucubrations.¹

Among the Caroline innovations was one connected with the stage, which has left its mark upon the whole dramatic literature of the period, and threatened to

¹ Nos. 165, 45.

cramp the English theatre by the load of unreasonable rules, that had already reduced the simplicity of the Parisian stage to absolute barrenness. At this juncture it was, that Dryden came forward as the champion of the modern against the classical school. And it is wholly characteristic of the chequered and unequal reputation of the author, that the compass of two short essays should contain the denunciation of the unities and an advocacy of rhyme; that in a few pages the writer should rise above Racine, and sink below Sir Robert Howard. The controversy was carried on in the form of a dialogue, not exactly in the style of Swift on a parallel occasion, but with a sufficient degree of piquancy and learning. It was agreed that the French plots, by confining the limits of the drama, had confined the invention of the dramatist; that what was meant to induce chasteness, had brought on poverty; and that, in the zeal against plethory, the spectator went away with his appetite but half satisfied, and the playwright with the knowledge that his imagination had been but half developed. A contrast between the great Elizabethan poets and the French poets then ensues, which involves the superiority of the copious and comprehensive genius displayed by the former, with a protest, on the part of Dryden, against Shakespeare's occasional flatness. Happy for him had he been content with finding out what he supposed to be Shakespeare's errors, without taking the trouble to supply what he supposed to be emendations to them. The reaction was too strong for him. He testified its undue influence on him when he pitted his "Aurungzebe" against the "Cid." In condemning, and with justice, the more than classic severity of the French school, he involuntarily grafted the worst features of that school, on the worst features of the Spanish. The French stage wanted a little of what the

Spanish stage had too much—more action and less declamation. It is not difficult to give the chief requisites of this composite drama. To quote a line from Cowley's Pindaric Odes, there was nothing but—

“Figures, conceits, raptures, and sentences.”

The language was conceived in the pompous spirit of Versailles. The actions and situations were conducted in the exaggerated spirit of Castile, and to complete the portrait, the dialogue was carried on in the argumentative spirit of Seneca. The entire style comprehended, in fact, all the defects of Racine and Corneille, with all the defects of Lope de Vega and Calderon. There were many reasons why this bombastic magnificence of thought and expression, which sate so well on the Spanish stage, should have ill become either the stages of France or England. The Spanish stage was all action. The absurd hyperbole, which calmer criticism might easily have detected in the gallantry and devotion of the heroes and heroines of Lope and Cervantes, escaped in the bustling confusion of incessant adventure. The ardent flights of fancy which passed unmolested amid the excitement of intrigue on intrigue, of ladders and trapdoors, duels and rapes, upon the Spanish stage, might have shocked even the comprehensive imaginations of the courtly *habitués* who crowded the naked boards of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Added to this, their idiosyncrasies might plead the excuse of national manners. No laws drawn from the codes of antiquity were permitted, as yet, to put a check on their chivalrous representations. The humble audiences who had just ceased to pelt their oranges and cucumbers at the Biscayans and clowns whom the author of “Numantia” had but lately deposed, were but little likely to brook the ligaments of Aristotelian rules. Cervantes himself, indeed, in his “Don Quixote,” had blamed his countrymen for their

flagrant violation of dramatic propriety. But he had been loath in practising what he preached. The grandsons of those who conquered at Granada, needed not to go to Greece or Rome for heroes or heroines. Leaving to others the stately coldness of heroic antiquity, their fervid patriotism found for them models in the simple annals of every native village. Romance was the atmosphere which they breathed. War, and the adventures of war, were familiar to them from their cradle. Even literature had taken up its residence, not in the breasts of voluptuous abbés or precocious mechanics, but in the hearts of warriors. Their greatest students had not unfrequently displayed all the qualifications of their greatest heroes. Cervantes had lost an arm in the battle of Lepanto, and had tasted captivity in the dungeons of the corsairs of Barbary. Boscan, Garcilaso, Mendoza, Montemayor, Castilejo, before him, had all been distinguished soldiers. Camoens, a kindred in misfortune if not in nationality, had upheld the boast of Galician valour in the piratic fastnesses of the Chinese Sea. To such experience as this, may be attributed those sanguinary decorations with which the susceptibility of Spanish honour adorned the drama—the sword and the dagger. Such stirring activity could find no genial response in the lives of the wits who ate their supper and feigned heroism in Boileau's parlour at Auteuil. The slightest symptoms of chivalrous vivacity were at once chilled by the stately ceremoniousness of *bon ton*. The mechanical sterility of the French stage, however, was amply compensated for by its rhetorical richness. The reason of the spectator suffered for the compulsion of the dramatist.

To make every tragic lover a Paladin, and every tragic king an Alexander, was the first fundamental maxim of the new doctrine, as it was enunciated in the

“Tyrannic Love” and the “Indian Emperor.” Nor was it considered, that to be true and to be brave, to indulge his mistress in every caprice and to make for her every sacrifice, was sufficient in the gallant. It was necessary for the latter, not only to convince his Dulcinea of his regard by his deeds, but to analyze that regard by his arguments; not only, in fact, to be a lover, but to be a logician. The courage of an Amadis was blended with the dialectic skill of an Aquinas. The hero is at once a Falstaff and a Hudibras—a cross-birth from the camp and the schools. “A mimical tone, a fantastic action, a couchant sense, and a phrase rampant,” to quote a rather fantastic expression from a contemporary tract, quarter the coat of arms of this *preux chevalier*. It would, indeed, not be easy, without an extract, to realize this strange association of metaphysics with heroics. It is almost beyond the reach of parody. Those who know Butler’s satire on the style, in his repartees between Cat and Puss at a Caterwauling, know that what was intended to be an exaggeration has, in reality, fallen considerably short of the original. The result of this rash and bombastic inversion of nature was the perpetration of inconsistencies that it is difficult to perceive a man of Dryden’s penetration could have overlooked. Thus, in his “Cleomenes,” the Copernican hypothesis is familiarized at the Court of Sparta; Ovid’s metamorphosis, and the story of Gorgon and the Dragon’s teeth, are bandied about as pleasant recollections in the harem of the Emperor of Barbary; and venerable mufti, who never heard of any kingdom beyond the rising and the setting sun, “o’erleap their horizon,” and treat Ximenes, and Wolsey, with a familiarity that would have made the racks and pulleys of the Holy Office to groan and creak again.

The vices and virtues of the characters partake of the same uncongeniality. There is no more comparison

between our smaller qualities and their gigantic emotions than there is between a Lilliputian and a Brobdignag. The heroes out-Orlando Orlando. The heroines are more than a match for Dorinda or Bradamante. But this is not the worst. It is not enough that the hero must talk in rhyme, in what Bottom calls "'Ercles' vein ;" that the verse must be heroic ; that, in fact, according to Dryden's own description, "the plot, the characters, the wit, the passions, the delineations, must be exalted above the level of common converse, as high as the imagination of the poet can carry them." Chesterfield's receipt that "tragedy must be something bigger than life," is anticipated, and the invisible world must be ransacked to supply in commensurate style the wants of the tremendous champion. The exaggerated magnificence of language and sentiment must be supported by adequate machinery. Ghosts, monsters, magicians, genii, all the spiritual paraphernalia of Arabian and Teutonic superstition must be introduced. To such an extent did the supernatural predominate, especially in the tragedies of Dryden, that he was ironically pointed out as "the man whom nature seems to have chosen to enlarge the poet's empire, and to complete the discoveries others had begun to shadow." There was, indeed, an air of greatness in some of his characters, but it was a bladdered greatness. They rise and swell, but it is the flatulence of a dropsy.

It was evident that Tragedy had been reduced to mere pantomimic extravagance, and, however galling the punishment inflicted on Dryden by Buckingham and his crew, the "Rehearsal" must, at least, be allowed to have made an effort to do for the mock heroism of the English stage, what the corrective caricatures of Cervantes and Le Sage did for the fooleries of an exploded knight-errantry, and the satire of Boileau for the four thousand four hundred pages of D'Urfey's "Astræa," the six

thousand pages of Gomberville's "Polixandre," and the ten octavo volumes of Madame Scuderi's "Grand Cyrus." Not that Dryden's muse always indulged in this sublimity of flight. There were intervals of repose, pauses during which the representations became more rational, the language less frenzied. The scenes between Hector and Troilus, between Sebastian and Dorax, have always been celebrated, and present a strange contrast to the rhodomontades of Almanzor and Maximin. It was his theory, not his execution, that must be impugned. The text on which he founded that theory was the two first lines of Ariosto:

"Le donne, i cavalier, l'arme, gli amori,
Le cortesie, l'audaci imprese, io canto."¹

Those, then, who would institute an invidious comparison between himself and Shakspeare, are comparing what was never meant to be compared. They might with equal reason compare "Robinson Crusoe" with the "Arabian Nights." Dryden's idea of the drama was neither of the historical, nor of the legendary, but of the heroic cast, and his conception of the heroic was such as inspired the champions of Christendom or the fabulous knights of King Arthur. "The laws of the heroic poem," he says, "indulge the poet with the liberty of dreaming all things as far beyond the ordinary proportions of the stage as that is beyond the common *words* and *actions* of human life." "A play dressed in familiar and easy shape, fitted to the common actions and passions of human life," he distinctly repeats, "is only a play in narration, not a heroic poem." Dryden made this mistake. He confounded the province of the imagination and the reason, and allotted to them a partition in their operation which they never yet acquired in the contemplation of either prose or poetry, reality or fiction. Extravagance has its

¹ See his "Essay on Heroic Plays."

limits beyond which it provokes not wonder, but criticism. Heroic poems may suit the silence of the study, but they shrink from the clamour of a public representation. When Dryden praised the oracle of Appius, the witchcraft of Erietho in Lucan, the ghost of Polydorus in Virgil, the Enchanted Wood in Tasso, and the Bower of Bliss in Spenser, he did not reflect that they were scenes, not in heroic plays, but in heroic poems. This is his error. Bring "Don Roderick" on the boards and it becomes a mere pantomime. The "Iliad" dramatized would not gain half the audience it does as an epic. Achilles may rant it in the Homeric ballads with propriety, and so may Rinaldo in the "Jerusalem Delivered." On the stage Bilboa and Drawcansir would be considered tame in comparison. It was but a practical exemplification of his theory, and a practical illustration of its extravagance when Dryden reduced the "Paradise Lost" into the dramatic form of the "State of Innocence." If any one was more entitled to have hoped for success in that theory, it was he. His diction and powers of versification came nearer to Milton's than any of his contemporaries. But as soon could a corrupt tree have brought forth good fruit. They served him as the knights of the middle ages were sometimes served by the weight of that very chain armour originally intended for their defence. Otway or Congreve did not possess or acquire half his talent and facility for rhyming, yet there are not ten persons found with morbid taste enough to leave the "Venice Preserved" or the "Mourning Bride," for the "Indian Emperor" or the "Aurungzebe."

It would have been a grateful task to have discovered any improvement beyond his age in his comedies. But looking at them even in a literary point of view they are almost below criticism. They are in truth wholly unsuited for comparison. Their merits and defects are

all their own. They were written for a class and they accordingly form a class in themselves. They were, literally speaking, *idola theatri*. The plays have assumed the impress of that spirit of singularity that called for them. All the characters are distinguished by a disgusting uniformity of expression. They are unmistakable representations of a particular set of men and women. They portray neither males nor females, but gallants of the stamp of Grammont and ladies of the same grade as Barbara Palmer. Half a century later, such exhibitions would never have been composed, or if they had they would undoubtedly have fallen victims to that ethical reaction which drew from Johnson his grave rebuke of Hannah More for having read "Tom Jones" and extorted the indignant exclamation of Dr. Watts to Richardson that no lady could read "Pamela" without blushing. It is an anomaly that he should have scrupled to versify Chaucer's "Wife of Bath," on account of its indelicacy, and yet should have unhesitatingly introduced characters and scenes unequalled for indelicacy even in the seventeen plays of Mrs. Afra Behn,¹ who, as Pope sang, fairly put hers to bed.

It is curious to witness the revolution that the next generation effected in the morals of the drama. Garrick attempted to revive one of Otway's least obscene plays, "The Soldier's Fortune," and, says Davies, was severely handled by the audience for his pains. It was an objection to the erection of Dr. Tension to the See of Canterbury, that he had as parish priest preached the funeral sermon over that strange child of pleasure, Nell Gwynne. A critic incurred the warm displeasure of the monthly reviewers for re-editing the "Clouds," a worthless comedy,² that would have been hissed on the English Theatre. Dennis, a name of more repute in his genera-

¹ This catastrophe actually occurs in the "Volunteers" of Shadwell.

² Nichols, vol. ii. p. 380.

tion than in ours, openly confessed that he preferred the "Œdipus" of Sophocles to the "Julius Cæsar" of Shakspeare, "because it is very religious." A "tragedy," he writes, "ought to be a solemn lecture."¹ The same critic heads a strong protest against the Italian Opera, on the ground that music destroys public spirit, that operas have been the invariable attendant of slavery, and that to their influence it is owing the modern Italian is not the ancient Roman. To introduce the Italian Opera into England, was for the yeoman of Kent or Sussex to plant the olive of Lucca or the orange of Naples instead of his pippins and wheat.

It might be urged as an apology for some of Dryden's dramatic defects, that he was, in a sense stricter than is generally conceived, the creature of his age. He had no guide to chastise his faults, to suggest corrections, an advantage which the merest scribbler of our days possesses in full enjoyment. Criticism was at its lowest ebb. Among critics Rymer held a very prominent position. Pope plainly asserts that he was a very great critic indeed. Yet this is the way that Rymer spoke of Shakspeare: "In tragedy he appears quite out of his element. His brains are turned. He raves and rambles without any coherence. His imagination was hankering after his masters, the cobblers and parish clerks, and Old Testament strollers. His Portias and Desdemonas are Betty Mackerels."² His superciliousness had already been spent on those "who are pleased to call the 'Paradise Lost' a poem." In his depreciation of Shakspeare he followed rather than led the tastes of his generation. After the Restoration, the old dramatists are scarcely noticed. Miserable alterations, such as "Macbeth" by Davenant, the "Tempest" by Shadwell, appropriated the success

¹ "The Advancement and Reform of Modern Poetry:" a Critical Discourse, by Mr. Dennis. 1701.

² "Short View of Tragedy." Rymer. 156 pp.

due to the originals. So little were the originals read at the time, that Quin, who frequently repeated some of "Macbeth" in company, always quoted Davenant's alteration, and Mrs. Pritchard, celebrated in the same play, owned that she had never read any but the part the prompter ordered for her. "Richard III.," so popular in Shakspeare's own day, was not performed from the Restoration till the end of the century. In 1704, the Queen commanded the "Merry Wives of Windsor" to be performed at St. James's; but though the whole force of Betterton's company was exerted, the piece had no success. Hume exhibits no relish for Shakspeare, and but little sense of his merit. His criticism in his History is singularly tasteless, and if we are to believe Malone, we are indebted to Lord Kaimes, that it is not harsher. Pepys speaks of the "Midsummer Night's Dream" as a stupid play, and Pepys, it may be supposed, was only endorsing the opinion of the audience. Horace Walpole, a man of real critical ability, has scarcely a kindlier term for the same play.¹ With these tests before us, we are not surprised to find Dryden on the same dramatic level with his critics, and hesitating, as he does in his "Essay on Dramatic Poetry," to put Shakspeare in the same rank with Fletcher.

The most valuable productions connected with his comedies are the prefatory introductions, pieces of criticism which still deserve to be read not only for the intrinsic novelty of their style—a style which has been

¹ Perhaps the prices paid by London booksellers to different editors may stand as a test of Shakspeare's rising popularity, as well as of the editors' respective merits:—Paid to Rowe, 36*l.* 10*s.*; Hughes, 28*l.* 7*s.*; Pope, 217*l.* 12*s.*; Fenton, 30*l.* 14*s.*; Gay, 35*l.* 17*s.*; Whalley, 12*l.*; Theobald, 652*l.* 10*s.*; Warburton, 500*l.*; Capel, 300*l.*; Johnson, for the 1st edition, 375*l.*; for the 2nd edition, 100*l.*—"Gentleman's Magazine," vol. lvii. p. 76.

A correspondent of Garrick expects from the promised edition of Johnson, that his emendations will be so useful, that this sixth edition will be the last, not only for this, but for the ensuing century.—Nichols, vol. v. p. 597.

rather inadequately called the imitation of Burke—but as the precursors of those miscellaneous reviews which were destined to produce the “Tatler” and the “Spectator.” But even these are disfigured by a few of those unaccountable irregularities, which appear to have been almost constitutional in the genius of their author.

Indeed any one reading his prose works casually, would be brought to a halt by the contradictions that must inevitably attract his notice. Thus in one place he will find him snarling loudly at Sandys, the translator of Ovid; in another he represents him as the best versifier of the former age, and his work “most ingenious and learned.” In the discourse on Epic Poetry, he places it above Tragedy; in the discourse on Tragedy, he in as many words gives Tragedy the preference. What must strike the casual reader, however, even more than his faults, is the marvellous power he displays over the English tongue. Here his strength lay. He felt it, and felt that it was a crisis with our language as well as with our literature. He consented, therefore, to exercise his skill rather than his imagination. I have always thought this the reason why, as a poet, he figures so largely as a mere translator. Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Chaucer he put into English, and such English as only he of all his contemporaries could have employed. Before Dryden revived Chaucer, to use the expression, he was neglected as an obsolete writer. Cowley regarded him as a dry old-fashioned wit, and most of those who were not antiquarians partook in Cowley’s decision. The few who really penetrated below the grotesque costume of his style, on the other hand, looked upon him as an antiquarian might look on his bronzed shield covered with iron-mould and rust, and plainly hinted that to polish his time-honoured diction was downright profanation. Such was the Earl of Leicester, one of Dryden’s

patrons, to whose opinion Dryden so far bowed as not to commence his version till after the Earl's death.

It would have been more satisfactory for Dryden's fame had he given us the Prefaces without the Comedies. As a rule, our English dramatists combine the office of comedy and tragedy writers in one and the same person. Shakspeare has given us specimens in both departments as near perfection as can be. The ancient drama made a partition in the offices. Aristophanes, Plautus, and Terence never put on the buskin. Æschylus, Sophocles, and we may include Euripides, are celebrated by no comical achievement. Dryden's intellect was one of those by which the rule might have been very beneficially observed. The style of his tragedies represents a mind of large tragic elements, impassioned, sensitive, not without a tinge of melancholy, and certainly not without a very inspiring energy. Nothing about him indicates lively humour, facetiousness, or sympathy with the commonplaces of ordinary beings, such as fill up the comic tableaux. It is therefore easy to be understood, that he forsook the guidance of his own genius, when he engaged to produce so many comedies a year. The scandal that he offered to his own better nature and intelligence produced one of the most singular phenomena in the annals of literature.

Every student of literature recollects the occasion which called for Jeremy Collier's chastisement of the dramatists of the Restoration. Collier was by his life and principles adapted for the office of a censor. A Jacobite of the strictest sect, he had at the Revolution espoused the cause of the Stuarts, and had early excited the spleen of the Government by pamphlets written in opposition to Burnet in defence of James. For these misdemeanors he had, through a conscientious scruple of not giving bail, been committed to Newgate. On the Assassination plot

being detected, he had, in company with Pratt and Cook, attended Sir John Friend and Sir William Perkyngs on the scaffold, and had formally absolved the former, for which he drew down on himself a strong declaration from the Primate and ten of his suffragans, and was outlawed by the civil authorities. During his outlawry he wrote his Essays on such miscellaneous subjects as clothes, duelling, music, the entertainment of books, &c., which have survived longer than such moral effusions usually do, and which, anticipating, as they did, the objects of the *Ramblers*, certainly entitle him to rank with *Montaigne* and *La Bruyère*. Before he died, he achieved the scheme of writing a History of the Church, from the first entrance of Christianity into Britain to the close of the reign of Henry VII., whose partialities did not escape the criticisms of Burnet and Kennet. The work, however, most in point here, is his "Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, together with the Sense of Antiquity on the Subject." The wit displayed in the treatise has saved it from the fate of Prynne's, and has entitled it, in the eyes of some critics, to a share in the praise we usually bestow on the charm that lingers round the pen of Pascal. But the very title showed that he had overshot the mark. He opened the indictment with the charge of profanity, as exemplified in the abuse of the clergy, evil speaking, &c. In all this he was correct enough. The "*Amphitryon*" and the "*Relapse*" were fair game for the moralist; and it was not going too far in contrasting the stage of the Restoration with that of Fletcher and Jonson. But to produce the authorities of Fletcher and Jonson against the modern stage was clearly a mistake of zeal; for though the reputation of the Elizabethan dramatists was not so uniformly threadbare, yet there were still holes in it. It was but reasonable, accordingly, that his oppo-

nents, in defence, questioned the justice of setting up the author of "The Custom of the Country" against the author of "The Mock Astrologer." Unhappily, Collier went still further, and besides producing the testimonies of Aristotle and St. Chrysostom, he committed the oversight of comparing the English stage, not indeed with that of Molière, but with the stage of Plautus and Aristophanes. The error was plain. It matters not in the least degree whether the Greek or Roman theatres are or are not less offensive than the English; whether the "Mencœchmi" is less obscene than the "Mock Astrologer," or the "Relapse" than the "Heautontimeroumenos," or the "Double-Dealer" or "Don Sebastian" than the "Eumenides" or "Antigone." Lapse of time, change of habits, diversity of tastes, would be quite sufficient to overthrow the value of a comparison as a test of morality. Manners vary, and with them the standards of judgment. The piety of one age is the irreligion of another; the models of one nation the reprobation of another. The venerable Fathers of Carthage, who interdicted the perusal of Thucydides and Cicero, would never have put in a salvo for the author of "Midsummer Night's Dream." The people who thought Diogenes a philosopher would have thought Pascal a fool. The people who worship an onion or a crocodile are laughed at by the people who adore a wafer or a toenail; and the Paphlagonian dupes who patronized the impositions of an Alexander, are held up to ridicule by the countrymen of an Abbé Paris. The classic author of the "Amphitryon," when he portrayed the lecheries of Jupiter, did homage to his divinity; and Hesiod and Homer, when they made their gods incestuous, made them god-like.

Collier's assault, however, disfigured as it was, had a sensible effect on the wits. Perhaps no piece of

criticism in the English language ever achieved such immediate sensation—not even that which provoked the “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.” Vanbrugh published a vindication of his condemned play, and Congreve endeavoured in his reply to gloss over the guilty passages, and by the pains he took to ridicule his priestly opponent showed that he could not afford to despise him. Dryden, though he flinched from “the horse-play of his raillery,” defended himself in terms half apologetic, half prevaricatory. He had the good sense to plead guilty to all “expressions which could be truly arraigned of obscenity or immorality.” Some of his excuses in defence of his conduct are singularly unworthy, and would have been laughed at, even in the days when Dr. Aikin and Letitia Barbauld were thought oracles in the province of theatrical criticism.

In the “Essay on Dramatic Poetry,” for instance, he tells us that a play ought to be a just image of human nature ; that the plays of the Restoration reflected the manners of the Restoration, and, consequently, that the playwrights were guiltless. The original axiom may stand, it is evident, without further ceremony ; but it does not follow, that because a fabricator of plays is licensed to make his selection from the wide world around him, he is at liberty to make those selections without discretion or judgment. His very choice imposes on him some degree of responsibility. A physician is licensed to make use of every drug of the Pharmacopœia. Because his diploma commissions him to practise, it does not commission him to kill. A painter is at liberty to decide upon objects for his own canvas. But no painter, however skilful, if he is desirous of a niche in the National Gallery, would presume upon that liberty and daub his canvas with objects the most offensive that nature could afford him. The same responsibility attaches itself

to the novelist. The difference between a play by Congreve or Dryden and a play by Shakspeare, is precisely the difference between a novel by Reynolds and a novel by Scott. To extract diversion from licentiousness is in the power of the merest caricaturist. To fetch mirth from innocence belongs to a master hand only.

Here is another specimen of what Jeremy Collier calls Dryden's comfortable casuistry. The chief end of comedy, we are told, is to delight. Instruction, if it has anything at all to do with comedy, is no more than a secondary object; for the business of the comic poet is to make you laugh. Why the poet may not instruct you at the same time that he makes you laugh, why instruction and amusement may not travel together, or what natural antithesis there is between a moral and a joke, we are not told. Even if the postulate were granted that the end of comedy is to delight, it does not follow that that end is obtained only by making comedy vicious—that to make a character facetious it is necessary to make it profane. At any rate, Dryden's receipt to purchase amusement at the expense of decency is both bad logic and bad manners. His recipe of taking a purge in order to be pensive, or letting blood in order to be poetic, is not more constitutionally fatal. The people of Elizabeth's reign seem to have been wiser in their generation. "To go to a theatre," says an author whom Collier quotes, "to drive away fancies, is as good physic as for an ache in your head to knock out your brains, or when you are stung with a wasp to rub the sore with a nettle." Such an epigrammatic quotation was far more to the purpose than the saying of Aristotle, that a false appetite alone can stomach scandalous satisfaction, and that a sick and distempered invalid is no good judge. As for the pretence that the dramatist only represented vice in such emphatic colours that he might promote

virtue, it is just as likely that the "Tyrannic Love" or "Limberham" should have converted their audience from blasphemy and adultery, as that any one of the Italian tyrants of the middle ages should have given over assassinating their enemies and plundering their allies through a righteous appreciation of Machiavelli's "Prince."

For comedy Dryden was not, in fact, suited. As he confessed, he wrote not for the gratification of his own partiality, but for the taste of the generation among whom he lived.

The influence of the age affected him, as the influence of Solomon's seal affected the genii in the fisherman's box. It is only when he does violence to his confinement, that he rises to his proper height and expands to his proper dimensions. One reflection alone, in consequence, can a contemplation of his chequered career call up. It is a pitiful truth, but when we see a Dryden descending to the foibles of conventionalism, or a Verulam and a Raleigh consenting to the dreams of witchcraft and the juggles of astrology, it must be owned that the constitution of genius permits it at once to soar and to creep.

To catalogue Dryden's miscellaneous productions is not my purpose. His "Alexander's Feast," and his "Ode to St. Cecilia," are known even to those who are ignorant of his "Fables," and his translations. This is not the time of day to form an estimate of his "Virgil." Every scholar knows that his "Virgil" is no more Virgil than Pope's "Homer" is the real Homer. The first thought on reading the two is, not that the writers mistook their vocation, but that they each mistook their choice of authors. Pope's genius was much more adapted to deal with the terser and more studious brevity of Virgil. Dryden, as he afterwards owned, would have given us more of Homer. As it is, his faults might be recognized by any one who knows the faults of his genius. He has

not translated "Virgil," but paraphrased the "Æneid." All sorts of liberties are taken with the versification. But far greater liberties are taken with the sense. The sins of omission and commission strike the reader at every metaphor and figure. Dryden, in fact, owned that he was exhausted before he was more than half through his labours. Pope at first experienced similar exhaustion, but the task grew easy to him as he went on. Dryden's choice was probably influenced by the barrenness of the field; Denham had tried his hand on a portion of the *Æneid*, so had Waller; Cowley had given a *rifacimento* of the second "Georgic." An almost national interest was taken, too, in Dryden's progress; Lauderdale, though in France, sent him his translation of the "Æneid." Congreve reviewed the work as it proceeded, and offered his corrections freely. Addison furnished an essay and the arguments. Translations were sent him from Italy, and all the extant editions of "Virgil" or his Commentators placed at his service. The slovenliness of Dryden when the work appeared gave full occupation to his critics; his negligence was well known to them, and such vulgarisms as "buxom Juno," "jolly Autumn," "grandam Cybele," were quickly fastened on. Spence observes that the work has so much spirit as to have the air of an original rather than of a translation. And this, I conceive, is at once its praise and its blame. It certainly is not Virgil, but it is Dryden—the strong, impetuous, full-resounding muse of Dryden. The chief characteristic, his usual characteristic, is that of great strength by the side of great licence. Dryden, indeed, saw his own deficiencies, and with that candid, good-humoured placability so peculiar to him, and sometimes so winning in him, even exaggerated them. "My copy," said the large-hearted poet, "like Spenser's false Florimel, made of snow, melts and vanishes when the true one comes in sight."

CHAPTER IV.

DE FOE, AND THE RISE OF PAMPHLETEERING.

Political Discussion is, in its Infancy, Political Satire.—Progress of Political Satire.—First, Verse.—Then, Prose.—Barbour before Cowley and Swift.—Reason of this.—Its Superior Form adapted to a Superior State of Intelligence.—Dryden.—Oldham.—Wilkes.—Junius.—The Restoration.—Culminating Point of Political Satire.—“Hind and Panther,” &c.—Popular Reasons for the Change into Sober Prose.—Increase of Party and Party Spirit.—The Revolution the Era of Polemical Literature.—Somers.—Locke.—Sidney.—Walpole.—On the Invasion of Wit by Politics.—History of Pamphleteering.—Ben Jonson.—Burton.—Sir Roger L'Estrange.—The Claims of Pamphleteering to Notice, as an Element of Literary and Political History.—Warburton.—Mrs. Macaulay.—The Fate of the Pamphleteer described by One of themselves.—Authors sometimes depend on their Works for Notoriety.—Sometimes the contrary.—Hobbes.—Warburton.—Bolingbroke.—De Lolme.—Shakspeare.—The Abbé St. Pierre.—De Foe.—De Foe's Political Experience.—His Adoption of Popular Views.—The Letter to a Dissenter.—The Proper Course for the Dissenters to have adopted on James's Indulgence.—De Foe's striking Personal Resemblance to William.—The Crisis of the Succession Bill.—Republication of Republican Works.—Fletcher.—Harrington.—Sidney.—The Trueborn Englishman.—De Foe and Anne.—True Character of Anne.—De Foe's Political Activity.—The question of Peace, and Curious Plight of Swift.—De Foe's strange Political Martyrdom.—His Shortest Way with the Dissenters, a Literary Curiosity.—His Sufferings contrasted with Swift's Course of Triumph in Ireland.—His imaginative Works.—Monopoly of Fame by his “Crusoe.”—Parallel instance.—De Foe and Bunyan, representatives of a Sect, or Caste.—Bunyan's power of Allegorizing.—Milton.—Æschylus.—De Foe.—Swift.—The “Crusoe” singularly characteristic of the Religious Nature of De Foe.—Plagiarism by a French Author to propagate Rousseau's opinions.—Account of it.—De Foe no Poet.—Coleridge.—“Tattlers” and “Spectators.”—Swift's writings, how far Philosophical.—De Foe as Anticipator of Howard, Macadam, and the Free-trade Catechism.—His strong English Characteristics contrasted with the tastes of his Literary Contemporaries.

THE contrast in the state of political satire, properly so called, before the Restoration, and subsequently to it,

must have struck every attentive student of English literature. The change from the sarcastic drolleries of Martin Marprelate and his fraternity, to the severe and masculine delineations of character that gave a tone to the factious exhibitions of Charles's and James's reign, is a feature not to be overlooked. The explanation of the phenomenon is not difficult. It should seem that satire follows in its development the course of poetry. The appeal to the imagination comes first, the appeal to the reason last. It took refuge in ballads before it appeared in pamphlets. The rudeness of the Atellan farces preceded the polish of Juvenal. On the contemporaries of Barbour and Gower the euphuistic conceits of Cowley would have been thrown away. On the clowns and minstrels who chastised the vices of the great in clumsy witticisms at the expense of the neighbouring prelate or the reigning favourite, ratiocination would have been utterly lost. An elaborate comparison, such as that which Swift has drawn between Pericles and Halifax, Somers and Aristides, would not have had the effect of a single rhyming couplet hiccoughed out in dog-Latin by a drowsy clerk. A rude Sirvente against Henry dropped on the skirts of the nearest greenwood, a vulgar joke on the name of Edward, or a doggerel comparison between De Montford and Mattathias, was far more influential, we may be assured, than a broadsheet by Johnson would have been. The most unlettered Goliard that ever directed his wit against a Duke of Lancaster or an Alice Ferrers, would have had far more power than a patriot like Andrew Marvel. The "Tale of a Tub" would have given far less umbrage than a squib by Skelton.

Not that I am disposed to attach any excessive influence to the political songs of what may be termed the Saturnian era of English satire. I am quite willing to believe that the political songs of a people may be an index to the

popular mind, but at the same time, I am very far from believing that any one of the songs which the antiquarian researches of Mr. Wright have given us, ever gave one-tenth the impulse to popular feeling as that famous air for instance, which we know by the name of "Lillibullero." The reason is plain. The elements of political satire are liberty and intelligence. As a political engine it can flourish only in a community where it is not illegal and where it is not unappreciated. In an age of ignorance it is unfelt, In an age of despotism it is harmless. Place Dryden at the court of Henry VII. and the genius of the author of "Absalom and Achitophel" would never have done for Simnel and Warbeck what it did for Monmouth. Place Oldham at the court of Edward IV. and the pen that could write with so much honest roughness against the lover of Lucy Walters, would have been blunted by the despotic inviolability of the lover of Elizabeth Woodville. Had Wilkes lived under the House of Lancaster his demagoguism would never have raised him from obscurity. Had Junius lived under the House of Tudor, his eloquence must have been silent, or had he inveighed against the Essexes and Leicesters, he might possibly have shared in the fate of Tom Nash, or Udal.

There were many reasons why political satire should have reached its culminating point after the Restoration. It was indebted undoubtedly for its sudden progress to maturity to the extraordinary combination of the rhyming and reasoning faculties in the person of Dryden. In his hands it ventured even on the stage, and that too, with an emphasis that would have startled the mystery-mongers of a preceding generation. His genius may be said, indeed, to have created a new department in satire as distinct from that in which Mapes wrote his pasquinades as the "Hind and Panther" is distinct from

the "Lousiad." The lineal descendants of Mapes, we take it, were not Dryden, but the authors of "Hudibras" and the "State Poems."

But politically speaking, the change in the composition, style, and object of the new satirical literature is to be referred to a twofold origin, to the enlarged sphere of faction, and the increased stimulus to party spirit. The reforms of William and Mary had totally altered the legislative dispensation of the English Government. The monarch was no longer the seat of political power. Business of state was no longer transacted in the closets of the royal palace. The day when personal opposition to a courtier, or public resistance to a court measure, led to a sudden death or mutilation, was fast declining. The mob who tugged at the clasps of Sir Robert Walpole's cloak in the lobby of the House of Commons, would never have seriously dreamed of repeating the tragedy of Overbury or Villiers, Godfrey or Coventry. Intrigues had assumed the air and importance of popular parties. The dawn of a new epoch of liberty, unknown in Grub Street, had just begun to dissipate the darkness of the old *régime*. The axe had been laid to the very root of that jealous system of exclusiveness which compelled Cave to smuggle an eavesdropper into the gallery of the House, and saw Johnson writing the debates in a garret in Exeter Street.

Another element but recently ignored was struggling successfully for its representation in the body politic. That process of action and reaction by which English society is moulded, and of which the English Parliament is but a concentrated type, began to display itself with a significance far too strong, and in an arena far too extensive to be nursed by the prolific brains of hireling poets and poetasters. The generation which had driven one king to St. Germain's and had dictated conditions to

another, was not to be led by the rhymes and sarcasms of a muse. As parties grew bolder and more defined, partisans grew less and less scrupulous. The strange and chaotic mixture of the claims of James and the claims of William, of the claims of the Church of Rome, the claims of the Church of England, and the claims of Dissent, had confounded amidst their alternate rivalries the two old constitutional principles of Conservatism and Reform. Almost as many shades of opinion as there were members disturbed the repose of Parliament, and almost every shade had its expositor and interpreter in or out of the House. There were Whigs like Nottingham and Portland, attached to William's person and title ; Whigs like Godolphin and Marlborough, in correspondence with St. Germain's ; old Whigs like Harley, indifferent alike to the King in exile and the King in possession, and only jealous of the prerogative. There were Tories who were Jacobites ; and Tories, who though they were not Jacobites, were certainly not Williamites. All these several parties, again, joined in their political prejudices, were subdivided in their theological tenets. There were Non-juring High Churchmen, Non-juring Low Churchmen, High Church Jurors, Low Church Jurors, Dissenters arrayed against the Church of England, Dissenters arrayed against the Church of Rome. The more varied the faction, the more various the literature. One uniform characteristic it possessed. It was almost all political and polemical. The era was essentially an era of pamphleteers. Such at least may seem no unjust description of the times in which a statesman like Somers condescended to pen his political tracts, a philosopher like Locke to write his " Essay on Toleration," and a patriot like Sidney to publish his " Discourses on Government." The monopoly of wit by politics was complete, and in a few years no author

could write a play without affecting the patches on a lady's cheek, or the smile on a courtier's mouth; no epigram without allusion to "ways and means," would pass muster at St. James's, and no ode without the rhymes of "nation" and "administration" be read at White's or the Grecian.¹

Pamphlets, indeed, form a very large and a very pretentious element in the intellectual and political history of England. Numerically speaking, they are, at any given period, an index to the quiescent or the disturbed state of society. The swarm produced at the Civil Wars is still the despair of every student, as the collection of 30,000 presented to the Museum by King George III. bears witness. The growing taste for this species of literature had been already testified to by Ben Jonson in his "Staple of News," and by the complaint of Burton in his "Anatomy of Melancholy," that if anybody reads now-a-days, it is a playbook, or a pamphlet of news.² After the Restoration, there was an official reaction against them. The reason given by the privileged licenser, Sir Roger L'Estrange, for refusing his countenance to them, is highly characteristic: "I think they make the multitude too familiar with the actions and counsels of their superiors, too pragmatical and censorious, and give them not only an itch, but a kind of colourable right and licence to be meddling with the Government." By the Revolution, the press was again set to work. It had been complained, hitherto, that political literature had taken refuge in imaginative literature, and that poets had become politicians, and their plays business of State.³ Now, however, the increase of

¹ See an amusing letter on this subject from Horace Walpole to Richard West, May 4th, 1742.

² Page 122.

³ "Reflection on the pretended parallel in Dryden's play of 'Duke of Guise.'" Pamphlet.

political discussion in a more consistent shape, ere the stamp duty had killed Grub Street, as Swift expresses it to Stella, was such, that it was regarded as a fatal disturber to the peace and welfare of families, "the meanest of the shopkeepers and handicrafts spending whole days in coffee-houses, to hear news and talk politics, whilst their wives and children want bread at home, and they themselves are thrust into gaols, or forced to take sanctuary in the army."

This species of literature, indeed, is not without its claims. It was preliminary and supplementary to the press. It encouraged discussion, and it preserved it. It was at once history, and its comment. The sphere of activity of the press proper was very limited. Its duties were of the very lowest description, those of a mere chronicle. It portends better times, the opening of a more ambitious era, when we find Warburton registering the boast of his friend that his "Mercuries" were read and admired in Ireland, Barbadoes, and Newfoundland.¹ It was something, for a certain department of literature to assume as its peculiar province the propagation of contemporary history, when the views of history were so low, and the avenues to historical research so jealously guarded, that no lady who entered the Museum for the purposes of research could be sure of escaping without an insult.² The treatment of the pamphleteer, indeed, was by no means adequate to his labours. In one of the pamphlets of the hour, an amusing picture is thus drawn of his destiny:—"We gentlemen authors write for the gentlemen printers, the gentlemen printers print for the gentlemen booksellers, the gentlemen booksellers sell to

¹ "Nichol's Literary Illustrations," vol. ii. p. 15.

² Mrs. Macaulay, the Radical Historian of the last century, was the first lady who repaired to the then reading-rooms for study, and was insulted too grossly for details to be given.—Pinkerton's Correspondence. Nichol's Illustrations, vol. i. 137.

the gentlemen readers ; but at last comes the Christmas pies, the tarts, the trunks, the bandboxes, the paper-kites, and forthwith consume what the gentlemen readers bought, the gentlemen booksellers sold, the gentlemen printers printed, and the gentlemen authors wrote."

There are authors who live only in their names while their works have expired. None but the student, perhaps, has made himself acquainted with the subtle ductility of the "Leviathan;" with the paradoxical enigmas of the "Divine Legation;" with the aristocratic philosophy of the "Idea of a Patriot King;" yet every intelligent person knows something about the strange vagaries of Hobbes, the testy temper and impetuous erudition of Warburton, the political eccentricities of the colleague of Harley, and the friend of Pope. Sometimes again the individuality of an author is sunk in his works. Who ever thinks of De Lolme's exile while conning his speculations on the "English Constitution;" of Cervantes' wound and poverty, while charging with the doughty Knight of La Mancha; of Shakspeare's childish pranks on the banks of the Avon, or his more manly frivolities at the Devil, while listening to the prayers of little Arthur, or the witticisms of Dogberry; of the Abbé St. Pierre rebuked into despair by the united wisdom of Voltaire and M. De Stael, while wandering with Virginia in those sweet orange-groves where the myrtle never dies, and the turtle-dove always loves. Such has been the fate of De Foe. His book is read throughout the civilized world. The goat-skin dress of Crusoe, the gaunt cap and umbrella, the cutlass and trusty musket, the man Friday, the settlement, with all its little colony of goats, pigs, parrots, and monkeys, are as familiar pictures in the tents of the wandering Arabs, as to the occupants of every nursery from St. Petersburg to Calcutta and New York. Yet not every hundredth passenger in Regent

Street knows anything of the strange and active life of the man whose imagination has amused their ancestors for more than a century and a half.

De Foe's existence reached over a long episode of English history. He had written his first pamphlet, and was known at the coffee-houses before Charles had received holy unction at the hands of Father Huddleston, and he was still in the vigour of his reputation when the death-bed of Anne was disturbed with the disappointed ravings of Bolingbroke, with the white staff under his feet, and the imprecations of Atterbury, clamouring for the Pretender. The period has been pronounced by a precipitate writer to have been, politically speaking, and for the purpose of satire, a mean one. De Foe's writings alone would be sufficient refutation of this indiscreet remark. Such an education as his falls happily to the lot of few mortals. While he was yet dangling in the arms of his nurse at St. Giles's, Monk had earned for himself a ducal escutcheon; the blood of Scrope and Hugh Peters had atoned for the success of Cromwell; Milton was feigning himself dead, to escape the peering eyes of the worthless Finch; the heir of Charles the First was initiating his reign with maypoles and orange-wenchies, was forgetting the promises he made in exile, and making new promises to forget, was renouncing the covenant which he had made in Scotland, and revoking the oath he had contracted at Breda, turning out into the highways two thousand ministers in one day, selling licences in St. Paul's Churchyard for his subjects to eat flesh in Lent, attending secret mass himself, and encouraging the malice of Clarendon, and the buffoonery of Sheldon;¹ and long ere he had left off his "Virgil" and his "Euclid's Elements" at Mr. Norton's academy, at Newington Green, the King of France had paid the King

¹ "Pepys' Diary," ii. 342.

of England four hundred thousand pounds to surrender Dunkirk, two millions of livres to subvert the Protestant religion and declare himself a Catholic, and three millions to overthrow the liberties of Holland; the Cabal had been formed; Bedloe had been presented with five hundred pounds; the reptile Oates had been pensioned; the strange tale of pilgrims, handcuffs, and knives, was being bandied about in every tavern; the city blunderbusses had been burnished up; hats, feathers, and shoulder-belts were brought into mode; De Foe himself was strutting about, flail in hand—as he called his oaken cudgel—through crowds of 'prentices at Cripplegate, discoursing under their voices about the wild Tory murderers, whom the Papishes had smuggled over from the bogs of Ireland. He had just entered the livery, and put his name down as a hosier of Cornhill, in the Chamberlain's books, when the reaction took place that drove Shaftesbury to the Continent, and brought Sidney and Russell to the block; and when the doctrines of Filmer and Hobbes on divine right and passive obedience were confirmed, on pain of infamy here and damnation hereafter, in full convocation, by the University of Oxford. Acts like these might well have made the most sanguine patriot tremble for his country. To an intelligent observer, the rapid succession of such scenes of tyranny, plot exploded by counter-plot, corporations disfranchised, electors bribed, the elected pensioned, parliaments unconstitutionally dissolved, jury-boxes unconstitutionally packed, must have recalled painful recollections of the past, and offered but poor *prestige* for the future. It was little to be wondered at that the best-disposed should have hesitated before he acted, and at last should have acted without reluctance.

If anything could have confirmed the leanings of De Foe, it would have been James's conduct on his

accession. A judicious correction of abuses might have conciliated many a mind in whom the offensive treatment of his brother still rankled. Moderation in politics—and especially moderation in those politics which had religion for their object—might have won over many a victim of intolerance, and subdued into inactivity many a lukewarm disposition not yet fanned into fanaticism; and, as far as human conjecture may be allowed, might, by a seeming acquiescence, have paved the way for the triumph of that Church which, above every other human system, knows well the value of insidious gentleness, compared with open violence and sincere antagonism. Those who condemn the stubborn and unyielding bigotry of James on prudential grounds, should not forget that on more than one occasion a blind and obstinate stupidity had assisted the cause of liberty and government. As it was, every one knows how James began his reign by fair speeches to his parliament; by appropriating the customs without his parliament's consent; by driving his English subjects into the cocklofts of the Netherlands; by proselytizing his Scotch subjects with the dragoons of Claverhouse; by filling up his regiments with Roman Catholic majors and colonels: by throwing Baxter into gaol, and expelling Locke from Christ Church.

It was not surprising that De Foe's choice should have been readily made. When Monmouth was captured by the bloodhounds of Portman, he took refuge from the butcheries of Kirke and Jeffries on the Continent. When he returned, he found the heart of James still as hard as the nether millstone. He recognized Father Petre presiding at the Privy Council Board. He heard the dispensing power legalized in the courts of justice, and read Catholic pastoral letters, printed by the King's own printer, for public propagation. The cowl and the rosary of the Jesuit, and the mendicant garb of the Franciscan,

the Carmelite, and the Benedictine, he met in every thoroughfare. He saw Farmer foisted on Magdalen College, Massey collated to the Deanery of Christchurch; Lobb, a chief among the Independents, and Vincent Alsop, the chief of the Presbyterians, acquiescing in a toleration which was but a thin disguise for absolutism.

It was this last act by which James, with a cunning which Voltaire would have admired in his favourite Julian, aimed at despotism under the specious appearance of clemency, that provoked De Foe's impatient opposition. The "Letter to a Dissenter," which was as famous then as Burnet's "Pastoral Letter" was a few years afterwards, and which has sometimes been attributed to De Foe, is now decided to have been the work of the accomplished Halifax. But De Foe's own sentiments on the occasion are known by his subsequent declaration. These sentiments agreed in the main with Halifax's, and were the sentiments of every intelligent Dissenter who, unlike Alsop and Lobb, dared to face unabashed the frowns which could not subdue Baxter and Howe. Some time before, when Western Europe proposed to allow the Turks to take Vienna, because Austria was at enmity with Western Europe, De Foe manfully exposed this illogical malice. He now wrote, that as he had formerly maintained that it was better for the Popish House of Austria to ruin the Protestants in Hungary, than for the Infidel House of Othman to ruin both Protestant and Papist by overrunning Germany, so it was more desirable that the Church of England should strip the Dissenters of their very clothes, than that the Papists should fall on both Churchmen and Dissenters and strip them of their skins. Was there anything more absurd than in King James giving the Dissenters liberty of conscience at the expense of the constitution? It is difficult to refrain from observing that it would have been well for

the Dissenters had they been guided by De Foe's advice. They evidently had the balance of power in their own hands. But they were not politicians enough to take advantage of the opportunity. They lost it, and it never returned. When under the ascendancy of their High Church opponents they were left not long after without instruction for their children, without security for their ministry, they remembered with regret their shortsightedness in not securing their liberty by a stipulated treaty.

De Foe's attachment to William has not passed unnoticed by any of his biographers. It was something like the devotion of Friday for Crusoe. On William's previous visit to London, the keen penetration of the former had involuntarily awakened in his mind a mysterious sympathy which was not to be bounded by the grave. The constitution of their minds was not dissimilar. The best friends and the worst enemies of either knew well that the intimacy with which the condescension of the Sovereign had hallowed the loyalty of the subject, had its origin here. The same solid judgment, the same phlegmatic independence, the same cautious temperament—slow to decide but quick to execute,—often, when a whole tribe of courtiers waited in the ante-room—found for De Foe ready admittance into the more social privacy of the closet. Even the countenances, so strikingly indicative of the character in each, bore a perceptible resemblance. What others taunted him with, it was his pride to recollect, that strangers had been known to observe that the aquiline nose, the eagle eye, the heroic mouth, and whole masculine *physique* of the monarch, which the poorest engraver even now cannot wholly mar, were common to both. To the end of his days he never ceased to remember, with respectful gratitude, with what gracious familiarity the Queen had been accustomed to ask his co-operation in the attainment of some novel

piece of china, or in the distribution of her favourite evergreens at Kensington. While James, hesitating between his bodily fear and his faith in the power of the Host, was dallying with the artful Compton, and while Oxford was pledging her plate for the invader, De Foe had been one of those who joined the triumphal march of William. When William entered London, the envious eye of Oldmixon had recognized him in a richly laced cravat and fine flowing cloak taking part in the cavalcade, And at that critical moment, when the scrupulous politics of the Tory Highflyers would yield only to the authority of Somers' famous precedent from the "History of Sweden," De Foe was on the benches of the Parliament House, listening with unfeigned contempt to the irrational delicacy of a party who affected still to regard as their lawful sovereign the man whom they had duped out of a kingdom, and still to regard as a stranger the man whom they had pawned their hereditary tankards and principles to introduce.

The measures of William's Government De Foe defended with the energy of a partisan. When William's opinion that with such an enemy as Louis for a neighbour, a standing army was politic, and even necessary, was made the text of a dozen pamphlets as an opinion more suited for the atmosphere of Bagdad or Constantinople, De Foe manfully maintained that prevention is better than cure, and that the surest way to keep peace is to be prepared for war. When the Partition treaty was made the ground for eriminating speeches in Parliament, a pamphlet, bearing the title, "The Two Great Questions considered," startled the town by the forcible reasoning in which the writer enforced the wisdom of the contract. His enemies did not forget that in his idolatry of William he did not want an apology for the massacre of Glencoe. His advocacy on the matter of the Succession Bill was certainly

more to his credit. It is difficult now to realize the critical excitement that attended the progress of that measure. It was evidently a crisis in which party spirit had free limits for a wild and dangerous career. A slight quivering of the balance, an unfair predominance of a heterodox view, might have converted the most constitutional monarchy in the world into a republic like Holland, or a despotism like Spain. There is no doubt that the nation, by the death of the Duke of Gloucester, had arrived at a dilemma similar to that which had occurred on the demise of Elizabeth, and that a mishap might have renewed the old scenes of Mary or of Cromwell. There were Tories deriding the Act of Settlement, and calling on the Pretender, Whigs exclaiming against the Prerogative and voting for limitation and the Elector, and Democrats intent upon the immediate exclusion of the Princess Anne and the establishment of a commonwealth. If we are to credit the writers of the day, republican principles were openly propagated. Language that had not been heard since the days of Wallingford House and the Rota Club circulated freely in the coffee-houses. Pamphlets appeared in which the Salic law was significantly recommended for adoption in England. Noblemen even gave themselves up to the work, and were earnest in the study of Fletcher's "Republican Politics" and such like publications. New editions of the works of Milton, Ludlow, and Sidney, were issued by the press. The "Oceana" of Harrington was passed through the town emblazoned with a dedication to Harley and the Lord Mayor of London. And the imposing irony of a tract entitled the "Free State of Noland," founded on the "Oceana" and the "Discourse on Government," was entirely lost in the terror which its artful gravity created. A faction was not wanting seriously to discuss the claims of the descendants of Monmouth himself, and

the pens of Drake and Davenant did not hesitate to report that William was secretly plotting with Louis and Monsieur Poussin. It seems amazing that in spite of these morbid symptoms the Bill which contained measures for the Protestant Succession, and the memory of which was preserved on the canvas of Sir Godfrey Kneller, should, on its first presentation, have met with no better treatment than a consignment to the Devil.

De Foe's most successful effort in the cause of the House of Orange was his famous "True-born Englishman." It is not necessary to repeat the old tale of ingratitude which reproached William with being a foreigner, and with rewarding in the hour of his success those foreigners who had assisted him in the hour of trial. The fame of Schomberg has survived the pamphlet of Tutchin. De Foe's pamphlet proved at once the futility of the sneer. An Englishman, he showed, was the most mongrel-breed on the face of the earth. The escutcheon of English nobility, he reminded the sneerers, was crossed by the bar sinister of a crowd of French cooks, Scotch pedlars, Italian adventurers, and Flemish bastards—the lascivious creation of Charles's lazy, long, lascivious reign. The literary merits of the tract were by no means commensurate with the subject. De Foe's name has been associated as a poet with the names of Motteux and Tate, and the best test of his lines is the standard of his companions. The "True-born Englishman" was but a doggerel, perhaps an intentional one. Had the piece been adorned with the pretensions of a highly-finished epic, it might have won a place in some popular selection from the English poets. But as a familiar satire it was hawked from street to street and shouted out at every market-place. The circulation in this manner reached to no less than eighty thousand copies. Hosts of unprincipled booksellers anticipated a

year's income by the surreptitious sale of pirated editions, at the various prices of a penny, twopence, and sixpence. Nine editions, on good paper, fairly printed, and sold at the advance price of a shilling, were set down to the account of the author. Even the sale of "The Conduct of the Allies" fell far below it. The effect of the sarcasm fully corresponded. Nearly twenty years after it was confessed that the boast of being a true-born Englishman was exploded. The word which had daily graced the speeches of the factious, and was in the mouth of every Jacobite, became as obsolete as wooden shoes. William, conscious of the service rendered his cause, sent for De Foe to the palace. At his death, "more mortally wounded by the pointed rage of divided parties than by the fall from his horse," while others were drinking to the health of Sorrel and the little gentleman in black—such was the Egyptian idolatry of a horse and a mole—De Foe gave vent to his feelings in an elegy entitled "The Mock Mourners," in verses singularly distinguished for a mixture of prosy commonplace and great irregular excellence.

The loss of William did not paralyze the energy of De Foe. For Anne, indeed, he did not entertain so strong a feeling of personal regard. Anne was, in fact, one of those characters formed to co-operate involuntarily with a great revolution. It is worth a pause to consider what would have been the effect on the popular protest against arbitrary power, had such a Queen as Elizabeth been opposed to it. More depends on the personal bearing of Anne than mere casual readers of history are wont to allow. Those who have penetrated behind the scenes have reason to be convinced that a little more strength of will, and a little more fearlessness of decision, would have given a very different complexion to the crisis to what it at present bears. But the fact is,

the formation of Anne's character had been fatally influenced by the circumstances of her life. Ever since she had known herself she had never known what it was to indulge without reserve in freedom of choice. Her position had been one to demand a continual sacrifice of her inclination to her interest and her duty. She had been early forced to educate herself in duplicity. Those whom she was disposed to love she had been compelled to treat with most hostility; and those whom she detested in her heart she had been forced to feign most cordiality towards. She had all affection for her father, and she had been forced to countenance a foreigner in usurping her father's throne. Her sacrifices had never met with adequate return. William wanted manners; Mary, to use the Duchess of Marlborough's expression, wanted bowels. Mary, therefore, forgot she was her sister, and William that she would be his successor. In self-defence, accordingly, she had been compelled to regulate her behaviour by such artful examples as she found in such women as Lady Marlborough, and to mould her disposition by such sophistical precepts as she found in such writers as Montaigne.¹ All the little arts which she had acquired in the hour of her misfortune grew up with her in the hour of her prosperity. She had been imposed on all her life; she became correspondingly slow, equivocal, and cautious. The lessons of Harley had perhaps strengthened her inclinations. Indeed, never had mistress so congenial a minister, or minister so congenial a mistress. In the disposal of vacancies a year often passed before the Treasurer decided; months more went by before the Queen would ratify his decision. She would consent to his recommendation; but though he

¹ "Conduct," p. 183. From whence it would appear that the old Gascon sophist was one of the very few authors she allowed herself to take an interest in.

held the warrant in his hands for her signature, she never would sign it on the spot.¹ In the affair of the Succession her vacillation was ludicrous. She was by nature a woman of strong prejudices, but those prejudices were happily counteracted a little by a weak will. She acted, therefore, after her kind. She would, and she would not. She wrote letters to her brother, assuring him of the reversion of the crown. She told Buckingham she would do her best for his interests. She then pretended she had no disposition to favour her brother. Bolingbroke had been seen under the same roof with him in the Opera, at Paris.² She said at Court he ought to have withdrawn at the other's appearance. At her toilette not one of her ladies could mention the Chevalier without drawing down an expression of impatience.³ If any Lord, as Argyle, for instance—told her some persons were suspected about her, or some persons presumed to suspect her, all the answer was a smile, in which the sneer was as visible as the assent, or a "How can any one entertain such thoughts?" Though she would not admit the claims of her brother, she betrayed no preference for the claims of her cousin. The Elector had been induced to demand through his ambassador his writ as Duke of Cambridge, prior to his proposed appearance in the House of Lords. The Ministry were in perplexities. The Chancellor referred the ambassador to the Treasurer, the Treasurer to the Queen. But no clue could be got to her inclinations. She expressed great annoyance to Harley; told Harley she would not suffer any of the Electoral family here; then, that she intended to invite over the Electoral Prince next summer; that the ambassador's applying to the Chancellor was a mark of contempt; then that he ought to have applied to the

¹ Swift.² Swift and Stuart Papers.³ Swift's "Inquiry."

Secretary of State.¹ But still De Foe was not idle. Any minister knew he could claim in the cause of honesty the honest exertions of the Veteran patriot. Was he wanted to assist the Union? He had left his family at Tooting, and within a week was on the other side of the Tweed, encountering the jealous arguments of Presbyterian pamphleteers and the more dangerous brickbats of Edinburgh mobs. Was he required on some secret service on the Continent? In less than two days he was on the road to Paris or the Hague. To this spirit of industry was added a spirit of independence proportionally strong. In an age when to be a political writer was to be a venal one, his honesty won him the pillory and a prison. In an age which gave birth to Fuller and the Turnham-green ambushade; in an age of Italian assassins like Fenwick, Barclay, and Friend, and of Italian statesmen like Wharton and Sunderland, his political consistency left him with a reputation superior to Swift's, Dryden's, and Prior's. No ministerial gold could seduce the stubborn old partisan to a level with the Leslies and Ridpaths. A partisan we can hardly call him. The nominal distinctions of party he did not appear to recognize, at least as a standard of conduct. Though a strong friend of William, while Prior was writing of James as the lean, worn, and rivelled old bully of St. Cloud, De Foe was openly deprecating the cruel treatment and insult which James had received at the hands of those who were nearest and dearest to him. Though a Whig, he strenuously supported against the Whigs the policy of a standing army. Though a Dissenter, when the question of occasional conformity was raised, he took part with the Church against Dissent. Though a Protestant, when the Bill for preventing the growth of Popery in Ireland had been forced upon the Queen, he took part with the Roman

¹ Macpherson's "Papers," vol. ii. p. 592.

Catholics against the bigotry of Protestantism. Though a friend of Godolphin, he was always regarded with esteem by Harley. Though a friend to Harley, he refused to support him on the subject of peace.

The mention of this latter measure reminds one of another contemporary political satirist of De Foe—I mean, of course, Swift. The question, as every one knows, had become a ministerial one. The prospect of the Tories depended entirely on its success. As the day approached, the greatest anxiety was felt at Court. The Whigs were straining their utmost. A powerful opposition had been mustered. The majority of the House of Lords was generally known to be favourable to them. Lord Nottingham, a man noted in that by no means barren period of eloquence for a tolerable speaker, had deserted to their side. Public indignation was daily fostered by the aid of tracts, in one of which Harley himself was represented as the English Cataline. The minister of the Elector of Hanover had given in a violent memorial against the peace, and caused it to be printed. Four editions of “The Conduct of the Allies,” it is true, had been called for in a single week; but the Lord Chief Justice Parker had already proceeded against the publisher, and the Dutch Envoy had lodged his protest. In the very quarter, too, where they should have looked for support, the Ministry found nothing but trifling, indecision, and inaction. Symptoms of indifference on the part of the Queen had been observed even by Mrs. Masham. On her way from the House she had refused her hand to the Lord Chamberlain, the Duke of Shrewsbury, and the Great Chamberlain, the Earl of Lindsay, and given it to the Duke of Somerset. Added to this, the Lord Treasurer himself had already sustained a defeat in the House on a collateral question on the peace introduced by Nottingham, and could only reply

to the anxieties of his friends, that he could not help it, that people would forswear themselves, and that the hearts of kings were unsearchable. The new Ministry, it was currently rumoured, had been already named. Somers was to have the White Staff, and Walpole to be Chief Secretary. The Whigs had desired their friends to take places to see the Lord Treasurer carried to the Tower; while Wharton had been observed to clasp his throat, to indicate the species of revenge they intended to take. The plight of Swift himself all this time was too miserable to be ludicrous. As the crisis drew on he determined on flying. He writes to Stella like a man bewildered. He entreated Secretary St. John to beg the Lord Treasurer, as soon as ever he found the change resolved on, to send him abroad somewhere or other as Queen's Secretary, where he might remain till the next Ministry recalled him, "when," he adds, "*I shall be sick for six months.*"

The effect of De Foe's high spirit was undoubtedly prejudicial to himself. Owning no parties, professionally attached to no faction, he was persecuted by all. His persecutions and his endurance reminds us of one to whom he was far superior, the independent Prynne. It would fill pages to detail his sufferings. His own language, in reviewing them, is painfully pathetic. His letters were opened, his papers extracted from the coffee-houses, his goods and merchandise mysteriously removed from the vessel that imported them. He was continually receiving missives, threatening to rabble his house, to carry him off, to murder him. Sometimes he was dogged into dark passages, sometimes his door was beset by ruffians in the disguise of bailiffs, sometimes sham writs were forced into his hands to extort money. Publications full of abuse were dropped into his window at Hackney. The "Observators," the "Rehearsals," and the "Med-

leys," calumniated him as a bankrupt and a cheat. One opponent charged him with stealing a horse at Coventry. Swift, who probably took his hint for his celebrated letter to Lord Oxford, on an institution for the improvement of the English language, from De Foe, called him in the "Examiner" illiterate and an idiot. Gay denied him the possession of anything but the superficial parts of learning. The Swedish Ambassador brought a false accusation against him. The Muscovite Ambassador complained against him, Narcissus Luttrell tells us, because he had written in his "Review," that "money makes Christians to fight for the Turks, gives servants to the Devil, nay, even to the very Czar of Muscovy."¹ On one occasion he was put into the pillory. Twice he was thrown into Newgate.

The origin of the first incarceration is one of the most curious in the history of literature. During the whole of William's reign, in spite of the toleration, a strong undercurrent had set in against dissent. On Anne's accession, moderation or restraint was no longer necessary. The feeling burst forth in precipitate violence. The Queen's speech at the first Parliament was ominous for the Nonconformists. The Church was alluded to in tones of triumph. The Commons, in reply, talked about its perfect restoration to its old privileges. What those privileges were was soon made manifest. The Bill for the prevention of Occasional Conformity had passed the Lower House. The Upper House rejected it. Their rejection only inflamed the zeal outside. Sermons, disclaiming toleration, were preached and published. Crowds of women, drunk with bigotry, echoed such doctrines. Swift, in his journal, bears humorous testimony to the virulence of party spirit, when he wrote that the very dogs in the street had become more

¹ "N. L.'s Diary," vol. vi. 224. Oxford Press.

troublesome, and that Tory cats and Whig cats held midnight debate on the roof of his house. The bloody flag of Saccheverel had been unfolded. The joke about two parallel straight lines meeting in a centre, was in every tavern. At length a pamphlet, entitled "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters," really written by De Foe, but apparently the work of some Ultra or High-flyer, was announced. The persecuting sentiments of the author were ironically exaggerated till they might have been fathered by St. Dominick. But notwithstanding the exterminating advice, the imposition was completely successful. People were quite ready to do for the Nonconformists what Louis XIV. had done for the Huguenots, and Philip II. for the Moors. They are to be rooted out of the nation—such was the language—as serpents, toads, and vipers. The gallows and the galleys were publicly hinted at. A Cambridge Fellow ranked the treatise next to the Holy Bible and the sacred comments. Down with the Whigs, down with the Conventicle, was echoed by press, pulpit, and coffee-house. Forty-one was to be revenged, and the process was—the shortest way. When the imposition exploded, and the Tories found they had been applauding a book written by a dissenting Pomponatius, the outcry was as loud on the other side. The "London Gazette" took up the official hue and cry. The tract, it was written, was a scandalous and seditious one. Whoever should discover the author, Daniel De Foe, should be entitled to the Queen's reward of fifty pounds. The Dissenters themselves still refused to be convinced of the ruse. One honest Colonel undertook to be hangman, rather than that the author should want a pass out of the world. Another gentleman, the president of a club, declared that he would deliver him up without the government's remuneration. At last, the zeal of Not-

tingham and Leslie achieved their object. The publisher was to be proceeded against in the author's room, and this the author would not allow. De Foe surrendered himself, was found guilty, and was sentenced by Sir Simon Harcourt to pay a fine of two hundred marks, to stand three times in the pillory, be imprisoned during the Queen's pleasure, and to find sureties for good behaviour for seven years. The severity of the sentence was acknowledged by his enemies, and turned the tide of popular favour. The pillory, in which the great wit stood, was hung with garlands. During the exhibition his health was drunk, and refreshments duly provided for him. The simple man's honest triumph may be contrasted with the gaudy ovation which the publication of the "Draper's Letters" procured Swift in the Emerald Isle. That singular love of pre-eminence, compounded with an inherent love of strife, and a morbid itch for notoriety, had just drawn from him his famous agitation against the halfpence of Wood. All his hopes of promotion in England had been surrendered by him with expressions of bitter disappointment. In his recent visits to London he was never received, except with a view to his corruption, with anything but cold and studied politeness. Once, and then only for a short time, he was permitted an entrance into the brilliant dissipations of Leicester House. Worn out with intrigue, he had carried his malignant spirit to the other side of the Channel, to meet with all the compensation adulation and political demonstration could supply to him. Wherever he went the ringing of bells, bonfires, and triumphal arches preceded him, and cities waited for him with their freedom enclosed in silver boxes. The Draper's Head became a sign. Engravings of his portrait, complimentary medallions, and handkerchiefs adorned with the patriot's likeness, were in every shop window, while the

exuberant enthusiasm of the worthy members of the Draper's Club at Taplin's found vent for itself in songs and midnight toasts, glowing with all the music and zeal of Irish chivalry. Yet, notwithstanding these noisy testimonies of popularity, those who are acquainted with his confessions know the feelings with which the object of them endured them.

I do not intend to enter into the details of De Foe's political existence under George I. There was but little prospect of literary leisure to gild the gloomy setting of one of the longest, the most laborious, and the most upright political lives that the Revolution produced. His last tract he wrote in 1715, and ere the sheets were in the printer's hands apoplexy overtook him. Sixteen years were yet to be spared him, and during those sixteen years occurred one of the most singular phenomena in the development of the human mind. The lateness of the growth of Dryden's and of Burke's imagination is familiar to all. But it would be difficult through the whole range of mental history to find a parallel for that anomalous author who could at the age of sixty, amid the hardening struggles of party warfare, give to the world such an argosy of fiction as that contained in the later volumes of De Foe.

The history of these volumes, indeed, one cannot contemplate without accepting the lesson that the contrast between their past popularity and their present neglect presents. While the adventures of "Robinson Crusoe" are to be picked up at every bookstall from London to Aleppo, there are about as many who turn from it to the "Cavalier," the "History of the Plague," or of "Captain Singleton," as there are who leave "Macbeth" and "Hamlet" for the "Venus and Adonis," "Paradise Lost" for "Paradise Regained," or the "Pilgrim's Progress" for the "Holy War." In works of

fiction it is perhaps natural that taste should be capricious, and the judgment of one generation reversed by the succeeding one. Who, for instance, reads Cowley as often as he reads Homer, yet Milton predicted that the works of Cowley would be read when the Homeric ballads were forgotten. Who reads Davenant? yet Hobbes claimed for Davenant an immortality that is due to Milton alone. Who gives Waller or Parnell more than a single perusal? yet Dryden modestly exaggerated the claims of Waller's muse at the expense of his own, and Hume in his "Essays" tells us that where he read Cowley once he could read Parnell fifty times.

In criticising De Foe's life and works, it is difficult to refrain from associating both with the principle of caste. There were, we take it, two men whom the great Puritan reaction brought forth, illustrating severally its two great phases—religious and political—Bunyan and De Foe. Bunyan's strong imagination, reacted on by the events of the hour, made him an earnest religionist. The associations of De Foe left him a political zealot. Their works are but types of their class. De Foe is Bunyan in the garb of a layman. Bunyan is De Foe in the pulpit. In the hands of a prophetic tinker human nature is represented in the form of a spiritual creation and in a spiritual capacity, full of energy, indeed, and inventive aspirations, but with aspirations set on things above, and with an energy that obeys an intuition less gross than that of sinew and nerve. With De Foe, as exemplified in his "Crusoe," the powers of man are bent on the attainment of earthly objects—earthly. It is this practical spirit which distinguishes it from the more imaginative interest excited by the "Prisons of Pellico" and the "Picciola" of De Santaine. Not a little of its absorbing interest we are inclined to believe rests in reality on this unwit-

ting admiration with which we watch the progressive triumph of man over matter, with which we see material nature, animals and savages, gradually succumbing to the coercive control of that peculiar contriving power, an excess of which has at different times produced a Franklin and a Watt. The power of individualizing he shared in common with the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress." Thus Bunyan's personifications are the most real, De Foe's characters the least fictitious. Bunyan was the last of that allegorical school which the piety or the superstition of the middle ages bequeathed to us. In this view the "Pilgrim's Progress" is not so much a novelty as a renaissance, and as he was the last, so he was the best. If we compare him to the author of "Visions of Piers Plowman," "The Mirror for Magistrates," or the "Faerie Queen," we shall at once see the superiority of his skill in his emblematical characters. His allegorical personages, regarded as attributes, are as far superior to those of his predecessors as the Michael and Gabriel of Milton to the Bia and Kratos of Æschylus. For De Foe, there is no writer in the English language whose fictions wear the garb of fact so becomingly. The anecdotes connected with them are ample testimonies to his imposing powers of originality; for indeed no writer without originality could ever have beguiled the penetration of Chatham and Johnson. There is not a child who does not believe in the adventures of Crusoe as strongly as he believes in the history of Joseph.

In powers of realization we would compare him with Swift, not but that the Dean gains by the comparison. There is more skill, it is presumed, required to paint natural objects naturally, than to paint monstrous objects consistently. Swift undoubtedly has very vividly drawn the adventures of Lilliput, but he had the licence which the unexplored province of the præternatural always gives.

De Foe painted the familiar, and the execution is always within reach of criticism. Swift can only extract our wonder or excite our scepticism. De Foe has been tried by our experience, and has almost cheated us of our belief. If Swift had been an artist, and preserved the same characteristics, he would have illustrated the infernal terrors of Milton's Pandemonium to perfection; but it would have been reserved for the cunning art of a De Foe to engrave the natural delights of his Paradise.

As with all books that hold the popular affections, his "Crusoe" is remarkable for its simplicity, and indeed, one might justly include in this remark all De Foe's works of fiction.¹ The language employed and the style are Herodoteanly simple. It is to an eminent degree the language of the common people. One of his satirists in derision consigned the circulation of his pieces among all the old women in London from Tothill-street to Limehouse Hole; and when it is remembered that this has been the fate of the "Pilgrim's Progress," it may be questioned whether the sarcasm is not a compliment. The "Crusoe" has been seriously attributed to the prison-hours of Harley; but it bears too much the impress of De Foe's character to admit of the least doubt of the authorship. The hero is strictly the model of an independent. On every occasion the idiosyncracies of the Puritan peep out. The strictness with which in the midst of his solitude he kept the Sabbath, and the devotion with which he observed the anniversary of his shipwreck, might have been considered a protest against Laud's legislation for Sunday sports. The strong penitential agonies in which he reviewed his past career, his

¹ "The first part of 'Robinson Crusoe' cleared the proprietors of it a thousand pounds, and though the second sold off about two editions, yet the booksellers would have given two hundred pounds that it had never been printed, the first would have been so much more saleable without it."—"Spencer's Anecdotes," 258. Singer's Edition.

self-condemnation when suddenly enlightened, the vision of the avenger who descended from a great black cloud, in a bright flame of fire, making the earth to tremble at his step, and the air to flash lightning as he moved forward with his uplifted spear to kill him, remind us of the earnest confessions of the Grace Abounding. The curious arguments and hesitations which induced him several times to spare the wretches who only wanted to find him out to eat him, the comparison between himself and Saul in the midst of the Philistines, the thought that flashed across him on seeing the footprint in the sand that Satan had taken upon him human form in order to frighten him, the superstitious curiosity with which he observed that all the accidents of his life had been providentially arranged for a corresponding day in the year, clearly betray the pen of the author who sent such moral effusions as the "Family Instructor," and the "Religious Courtship," into the closets of kings. The conversation with Friday on the existence of evil in the world might have been held by De Foe any Sabbath from the pulpit in Surrey Chapel.

It would have surprised De Foe, could he have anticipated that his work was to be pressed into the service of a certain school of the French philosophy of the eighteenth century. Such was the case. Soon after the appearance of the "Emilius," Paris produced a work entitled the "New Robinson Crusoe," in which the author definitively stated that the undertaking had been suggested to him by that eminent production. Most readers of French literature know the passage where Rousseau apostrophizes the work of De Foe as far above Aristotle, Pliny, and Buffon. It was complained, however, by the author of the "New Crusoe," that the old did not really come up to Rousseau's mark, that he starts on his solitary existence with European tools and

instruments, which Rousseau's natural man cannot have. The author then proceeds to carry out Rousseau's idea. The new Crusoe like the old one, is shipwrecked on a desert island. He is literally in a state of nature. Nature, however, is cunningly made to supply the assistance which civilization had offered to his prototype. A natural cave is converted into his dwelling-place, of which a row of withies is the wall; a shell is his spade; a stone of an opportune shape, with an opportune hole in it, is his hatchet; a cocoa-nut forms his cup; the back of a turtle his trough; the bones of fishes supply the place of needles and pins; bark does the duties of pack-thread; palm-leaves act for gingham and silk; and the skins of a lama for wearing apparel. A flash of lightning compensates for the absence of a tinder-box. There is some little ingenuity displayed in the first portion of the story, though the form of it, in dialogue, tells sadly against its interest. By far the greater portion of the tale itself is an exact copy of De Foe, without De Foe's marvellous circumstantiality. If the plagiarism was unacknowledged, as to all appearance it was, it constitutes one of the most impudent thefts that one foreigner ever committed on the intellectual property of another. All the graphic details, so familiar to readers of the original tale, the start at the impression of the foot in the sandy solitude, the discovery of savages at their loathsome feast, the rescue of the Indian victim, his baptism after the day, Friday, his education and wild habits, the means of rescue, a storm at sea, and a deserted ship, which was to supply the island with every European article of defence and consumption, the ultimate rescue by Friday of his own father from an Indian war-feast, the stockade, assault, and repulse, every little item, including the celebrated scene of the dying goat in the cave, have been given afresh with far less of vividness and of realistic power,

and, under the most favourable circumstances, in the most unwarrantable spirit of appropriation. It is only this latter feature that can render the work itself at all an object of literary curiosity.

It seems rather paradoxical that De Foe should be accused of want of imagination. It is certain he was no poet, though he himself was disposed to set a high poetical value on his metrical treatise "*De jure Divino*." Pope, in his "*Treatise on Bathos*," assigned him his portion among the ostriches, which, though they could not fly, were yet able to outrun the fleetest horse; an idea more than once appropriated by a writer who, to use the words of Dryden, when he invades authors, invades them like a monarch, and whose skill converts theft into a victory. Most of his imaginative productions are the result, not so much of a romantic fancy, as of a keen observation and a methodical reason. It will perhaps help to diminish our wonder at the lateness of their publication, if we can be convinced that his fictions draw as little upon the ideal and as much upon experience as fictions can possibly do. His education, doubtless, assisted him. As a volunteer, in the service of constitutional government, his avocations must have carried him through scenes of stirring adventure. The Highlands were as familiar to him as his own Stoke Newington. And in England there was scarcely a province that he had not visited. From his trips across the Channel, and his occasional intercourse with such characters as Dampier, his genius might have derived the lawless encounters of the piracies of "*Captain Singleton*." While his experience about the Court of Charles II., or as a political refugee in the haunts of the metropolis, or in Newgate, must have brought before his observant eye many an original for the fortunate Roxana or the guilty Moll Flanders. To the wretchlessness of human nature his

mind, like the mind of Crabbe and of Hogarth, must have been peculiarly sensitive. For, like Johnson's, it was a believing one. The Doctor, it is well known, believed in second sight, and almost believed in the Cock Lane Ghost. Nor is there want of evidence to show that De Foe himself shared in a rather characteristic conviction in the phenomena of dreams and in the spectral paraphernalia of the spiritual world.

It has been said that the discovery of the footprint on the sand was a poetical touch on the part of the author worthy of Shakspeare. But we may be quite sure that the author no more dreamt of setting himself up as a rival to him whose genius has given us the scene of Lady Macbeth's guilty start at the blood-stained hand, than the originator of the nursery rhymes on the Covetous King thought of making, according to Lord Macaulay, the best hexameter in the English language, when he wrote—

“The Queen was in her garden, making bread and honey.”

Some have doubted whether from the presence of the practical element so strongly developed in his constitution, he even possessed those lighter qualities, belonging more to the fancy than to the reason, which so admirably adapted Steele and Addison to be the arbiters of taste. Coleridge said, he could select papers from his “Review” not inferior in wit and humour, and superior in style and thought, to the “Tatlers” and “Spectators.” But I am more disposed to allow him the attributes of solidity than of raciness. Under these heads he showed at once his superiority and his inferiority to Swift. Rhetorically speaking, the brilliant, easy, idiomatic style of the Dean places him, as a pamphleteer, beyond reach. But here his praise ends, and De Foe's begins. His writings are not those of a philosopher, but those of a partisan. We look in vain for evidence of a mind probing deep into the

causes of things, uninfluenced by everything but an anxiety after truth. The reader of his works rises from their perusal with a perfect knowledge of the particular defects of particular men, but the motives of those men, the moral origin of those defects, are never touched upon. There is abundance of good satire, of hearty abuse, but no analysis of character, no appeal to the metaphysics of nature. This is doubtless partly to be attributed to the confined sphere of his composition. He wrote not for mankind, but for a class. His dealings were not with universal truths, but with local facts. Propositions were framed for him, and a distinct course of reasoning laid down. Hence, in all his discussions, even in those which admit of more elaborate treatment, he clings to circumstances, discarding the cause for the simple effect. This is more evident in his larger treatises. In his furious invectives against the Whigs, he abuses them, not because their legislation was based on false political conclusions, but because Somers and Godolphin were not Tories, and Lord Oxford and Dean Swift were. He promoted agitation among the Irish, not to redress the real grievances of Ireland, the animosities of class, the influences of a deteriorating religion, the absence of educational legislation, but simply because Irish coffers were being enriched by halfpence from a private mint. The contrast in De Foe would be best illustrated by a recurrence to his "Essay on Projects." The author of the "Directions to Servants" could never have elevated his mind from the absorbing frivolities of politics to conceive it. It is with this "Essay" that De Foe's fame as a political economist is associated. It would not be fair to compare him to Bacon, or, what would be a more genial comparison, to Adam Smith. Yet it is certain that he comes nearer to the author of the "Wealth of Nations," than do the economists of his

own day, Child, Petty, or Davenant. It would hardly be believed that the man whose name has been overlooked by Smollett, and later historians, had anticipated Macadam and Howard, had laid the foundation of Bethlehem Asylum and Greenwich Academy, had published expositions of views on commerce not unworthy of the Free Trade Catechism, had suggested the reform of the national banking system, had proposed the establishment of provincial banks—and this, too, when not twenty years before the rise of shops in the country villages had been seriously deplored as the ruin of the great towns; and had projected a scheme for a commission of bankruptcy, for friendly societies, and for an institution for the education of females. It is not one of the least anomalies about his singular character and fate, that posterity should forget the merits of a writer who had, in his time, composed one of the most extraordinary books since the “*Century of Inventions*” or the “*Principia*,” and whose moth-eaten pages should one day help to mould the mind of such a philosopher as Franklin.

In closing a review of De Foe’s career, one cannot help acknowledging that there is no writer in English literature whose characteristics bear more strongly the stamp of nationality. Everything about him is identified with that idiomatic creature we are accustomed to recognize as the portrait of an English citizen. Goldsmith is Irish all over. The artistic affability of Addison would rather suggest an association with the fellow-countrymen of La Bruyère. The artificiality of Johnson’s exterior compromises the earnestness of his spirit. The brusque and indomitable emphasis which Swift sometimes infused into his demeanour, comes nearest to him. But it is in De Foe alone we meet with the plain, unembellished existence of the Anglo-Saxon element, exemplifying itself in its vigorous common sense, its epigrammatic

expressiveness, its homely and prosaic reality. His individuality realizes the philosophy of common life as thoroughly as that of Addison illustrates its amenities. His experience embodies, as it were, the chivalry of the middle class, the heroism of the bourgeoisie. Every page of his writings is impregnated with the spirit of rational industry, which he opposed to the sensualism around him, and of which he is the canonical exponent. Cobbett did not yield less to sentiment. Critics have decided that this unmusical deficiency in taste has ruined his reputation as a literary artist, that his versification is harsh, his characterization homely, his narration without variety. The remark might, indeed, be justly extended to his conduct in matters where other men, with more sensibility, would have escaped the imputation. The reason is plain. His speculations had not been elaborated in the studio. His academy had been the world. He had not been "swaddled, rocked, and dandled," into a theorist. "Nitor in adversum," was his motto, as emphatically as it was Burke's. His sphere of contemplation was not in the realms of imagination, but of fact. His studies were identified, not with the ideal, but with the real. He had no sympathies with the prevailing tastes of the age. His powers were enlisted in another quarter; his subjects were of sterner stuff. The delicacies of criticism, the elegancies of the "belles lettres" he resigned to the wits, who decided over their cups at Button's on the merits of Pope's "Homer" and Tickell's; or to the fine gentlemen of White's, who relieved the tedium of ombre with bets on the arrival of Sir Henry Newton's despatches from the Court of Tuscany, with Filicaja's last Latin ode on Lord Somers. His standard was not "mode," but utility. His character accordingly shone, to use a Baconian expression, with a dry light. His mental and moral structure partook of the angular

conformation peculiar to his sect. In his idiosyncracies the mechanical predominated. His ethics were those of a reformer, and were composed in the single word Progress. A century later in England he would have been called a Utilitarian, in Germany a Eudæmonist.

CHAPTER V.

POPE AND SWIFT, BOLINGBROKE AND HARLEY.

Literary Biography Prolix and Minute.—English and Continental Men of Letters.—The Moral and Physical Welfare of Literary Men before and after the Revolution.—The System of Dedication a Mark of their Condition.—The Theory of External Rewards at the Revolution examined.—Dissociation of Literature from Politics after Anne, and consequent Dissociation of Literary Men from the Court.—Pope.—Arbuthnot.—Gay.—Johnson.—Its results in creating a Literature of the Beau Monde. Relations between the two Literatures.—Goldsmith.—Gibbon.—Mrs. Macaulay.—Johnson.—Lord Lyttleton.—Walpole.—Chesterfield.—Mutual Intercourse of Literary Men.—The Quarrels of Authors.—Churchill.—Philips.—Moore.—Byron.—Macaulay.—Pope.—His Early Position as a Man of Letters.—His Splenetic Habits.—His Quarrel with Addison.—An Unbiased Estimate of Addison's Character.—Pope's Treatment of his Friends.—The Affair of his Letters.—The Relation of Bookseller and Bookmaker Examined and Exemplified.—Pope's Poetical Position Defined.—Dryden.—Reaction in English Poetry.—Cowper's Place in that Reaction.—Scott.—Byron.—Effect of Politics on Poetry.—Classic Poetic Fervour.—Speculation on Pope's proposed Epic.—His Satires and Epistle to Abelard Criticized.—Swift as a Satirist.—D'Alembert on English Criticism.—Milton.—Bacon.—Addison.—Swift's Poetry to be Examined by the Light of his Life.—Attempt at Elucidating his Real Character.—Not Trusted by Queen Anne's Ministry.—The Opposite Theory Refuted.—Harley's Character.—Bolingbroke.—His Historical Position.—His Personal Demeanour.—Connection with Pope and Swift.—Particular Estimate of his Intellectual Career.—His Superiority to Harley.—His Versatile, Imposing Genius.

THE prolixity of the literary annals of the eighteenth century is remarkable. The general intimacy with writers of every grade may be said to exceed the vulgar intimacy with those other characters, whose position the muse of history has marked by a more dignified and a more emphatic prominence. Most persons who would cheerfully own their ignorance as to whether Charles II. was a quick walker, or William of Orange a hard drinker,

would repel the insinuation on their reading, were they suspected of not knowing that Dryden took snuff, and Johnson was purblind and laughed like a rhinoceros. Their failures and virtues, the gestures and dress, the habits and even the conversations of the men of letters, have been reported to us with a fidelity that Plutarch would have envied, and that almost mocks the oblivion of the tomb. The grand outlines of Johnson's figure, with all its irregularities, as they have been preserved to us by the skill of an artist as superior to Plutarch, as Plutarch is to Diogenes Laërtius, stand forth in relief too bold to escape the notice of even the most transient passenger. But the man who required to be told that Lord Chesterfield was one of the best Viceroy's Ireland ever had, that Sir Robert Walpole governed the kingdom in Latin, that Pitt used a crutch, and Fox loved ombre and champagne, would tell you in turn how Swift rose from planting asparagus in Moor Park, to lord it over the October Club, how Addison could not talk without a bottle, how Pope had a hunch on his back, and died worth eight hundred a year, how Steele entertained the beggars of Edinburgh on wine-whey, and whiskey-punch, with bailiffs for livery-servants, how Sterne joked in his sermons, and died in the hands of menials, and how Goldsmith was an inspired idiot, who wrote like an angel, loved sassafras, and was buried two thousand pounds in debt.

And yet no period more deserves to have the veil of secrecy drawn over it, calls up more chequered feelings, or presents more chequered scenes of high intellectual culture, by the side of such little heroism of character, as that period which dates from the birth of Dryden to the birth of Scott. It would have been a flattering feature in our nationality if the mental history of England had offered any favourable contrast in its material condition to that career of misfortune which has so uniformly

attended the footsteps of genius, and almost identified the profession of authorship with the calamities of authors. Unhappily the annals of our literature present no exception. For all the bitter associations connected with its pursuit abroad, we can oppose associations more bitter still. Tasso, apostrophizing his cat for a single ray of light from her eyes, Cervantes in prison, Molière starving for a bowl of broth, are episodes of misery and woe to which a very ordinary familiarity with native biography can find ready counterparts. There can be but small room for congratulation in the contemplation of the physical and moral life of the man of letters, that toil, envy, want, the grossest poverty, accompanying the grossest viciousness, should form the prominent items of his existence, and that satire should be so often authorized to point to a cellar in the Mint, or a cell in the Fleet, as the final repose for the remnant of a body snatched from long years of servitude to the patron or the bookseller.

It would be unjust to attribute this uniform picture of demoralization to individual conformation. Personal characteristics, indeed, it is but too certain lent their co-operation, but the force of circumstances, of those circumstances in which literature was placed, must not be overlooked in the calculation.

Much has been said of the condition of the man of letters in Johnson's time. It has on one occasion and another been stigmatized as the epoch when the degradation of literature was complete, and when literary morality was at its Nadir. The criticism that comprehended in this view the fate of the Churchyards, Stowes, and Butlers, would probably lend but a reluctant assent to this position. It would probably question, and question with justice, whether the generation in which Bacon expressed his fear that he who had lived to study should have to study to live, was authorized to upbraid that

generation which repeated at once the fears and the anti-thesis of the philosopher, in the sententious expression of Johnson, "that he who lived to please must please to live." Physically speaking, with some little margin, the imputation cast on the Johnsonian era may stand. Morally, however, I would award the precedence in ignominy to the era immediately succeeding the Restoration. Externally, the condition of the man of letters at the court of Charles, has much in it that is attractive. It is evident that, at the first glance, there is much to be envied in the existence of the wit who formed ties of friendship, and even stronger ties of kindred, among the haughtiest *noblesse* in the world, who treated his sovereign with far less of ceremony than a grandee of France treated Richelieu, and who even, though he did sometimes meet with Black Will and his cudgel, had that sovereign to visit him on his sick-bed, and to send him a purse to get him out of the Fleet; but, in truth, this was but the tinsel that made the chains of slavery more conspicuous. There was patronage indeed, but there was no independence. The ancient serf was not more subservient to his liege lord than the literary bondsman was to his patron. Fidelity obtained for him a little of the patronizing affection which a gentleman of the court of James might have bestowed on his Alsatia squire. Animosity forfeited his favour, and sometimes led to a Rose Alley ambushade. No familiarity could compensate for the demoralizing effect of that system, which in the indignant language of satire reduced the author's profession below that of jack-puddings, jugglers, and mountebanks, and rated his subservience at less than a coachman's pay.¹

Among the incidents attached to this moral servitude, none perhaps is more expressive of the utter degradation

¹ See Oldham's Works.

of the literary character than the fashion of dedication. Johnson, on this ground, has not failed to taunt Dryden with his servility. He probably had him in his eye when he wrote in the "Rambler"¹ that to solicit patronage was to put virtue to sale, that none can be pleased without praise, and few can be praised without falsehood. But the characteristic neither commenced nor expired with Dryden. Adulation had become idiomatic even in Fuller's time. It was as much the mark of the man of letters as an oak leaf was of a cavalier, or a calf's head of a Puritan. For poets, indeed, it was as much a religious necessity to flatter, as it was for an Egyptian to propitiate Osiris by the offering of a spotted bull, and it is accordingly with a full appreciation of the duties of the laureateship, that I can find a more ready apology for the author of the "Hind and Panther" comparing the new-born babe of James to the infant Child at Bethlehem, than for Bishop South, for instance, calling Milton, from his pulpit at Whitehall, "a blind old adder." But even the most indulgent critic would be less ready to excuse that helpless spirit of servitude which, with an insensibility that has not escaped the irony of Shaftesbury,² openly subordinated in the preface to the "Don Sebastian" the just canons of criticism to the *ipse dixit* of an earl. It must be owned to have been symptomatic of a reaction against this pliant morality, when Pope put Middleton into the "Dunciad" for the dedication of his "Cicero" to Lord Hervey, and when he dedicated his own translation of the "Iliad" to Congreve.

It is not without its lesson to observe how this deficiency in *amour propre*, in that spirit of self-respect and independence which left Spinoza polishing glasses in a garret in Leyden, and practising Epicureanism on twopence a day, rather than dedicate his works to Louis XIV.,

¹ No. civ.

² "Characteristics," vol. iii. p. 277.

has deformed the literary character up to the moment that Johnson declined the patronage of Chesterfield. It has, indeed, been the custom to regard with special gratification the era of the Revolution as the saturnalia of our literature. The political Revolution did for the Literature of England what the social Revolution did for the Literature of France, when it carried its audience from laughing at the triflings of the Jesuits and Jansenists, Classics and Moderns, to contemplate the publication of the "Encyclopédie." Morally speaking, its tone was improved, and the promise of improvement was amply ratified, when in the same cottage where the ghastly viciousness of the Restoration had just expired in the person of Sedley, the virtues of a new era were initiated by the pen of Steele. In addition to this, it became allied to the science of government, and by that alliance acquired something of the dignity of a State machinery. Statesmen became men of letters and men of letters became statesmen. The first Lord of the Treasury issues a "Treatise on Government," and the author of "The Campaign" becomes Mr. Secretary Addison. Bolingbroke indites his idea of a patriot king, and a pamphleteer grows into Mr. Commissioner Steele. Pensions, deaneries, secretaryships, were the common rewards of talent—a splendid indemnification for that capricious support, which had sent Otway from the champagne dinners of my Lord Plymouth to starve for a week at a Tower hill ale-house. A poet had a share in the administration of the State, such as none had in the most intellectual days of Athens or Rome, and such that would have made Plato shudder. But literature was still distinctly a trade, a matter of supply and demand, of labour and recompence. The idea of service was still distinctly and professionally associated with the literary vocation. Nothing was gained without service. The minister that made Swift a Dean,

would never have made Macaulay a Baron. Indeed, nothing better illustrates the footing on which literature stood, than the precariousness of the tie which bound it to its patrons, and the unscrupulousness with which that tie was either contracted or broken. Thus, a few lucky lines got Addison on the road to emolument, and an unlucky paper in his "Tatler" lost Steele his gazetteership. The dedication of his Pastorals to Bolingbroke obtained for Gay his appointment of Secretary to the Hanoverian embassy, but when Bolingbroke fell, he fell with him. Nor was venality and parasitism less its characteristic than at the worst times of the Restoration. A seat at a Minister's table may have supplied Young with invitations for a week; but he wrote the "Epistle to Lord Lansdowne" and the "Instalment." A drive in a Minister's chariot may have provided Prior with a citizen's coach ever afterwards, but he was guilty of the "Carmen Sæculare." Tickell obtained an Under-Secretaryship, but he wrote the "Royal Progress." Rich as the profession was with such rewards, it cannot be denied that the system was not without its prejudicial influences, and that it is a pleasure to turn from such shackled prosperity to the more sombre scenes of a more independent era—to quit the presence of Parnell lingering at the door of my Lord Oxford's chamber, and of Rowe learning Spanish to win his favour, to see Johnson asserting his freedom to Bute, and Goldsmith resisting the bribes of Walpole.

It was, I am inclined to think, owing in no small degree to their entire dissociation from the Court, that the contemporaries of the "Rambler" and "Guardian" could afford to descant on the mischiefs of following patrons, and the meanness of indiscriminate dedication. Whether this dissociation was attributable at all to that individual insensibility to the claims of literature that Goldsmith imputed to Walpole,—or whether it was that

Walpole's exigencies were satisfied with the mediocre abilities of the Guthries and Arnalls,—or whether, again, the separation was promoted by the interference of an intellectual middle class, of that class which in the persons of Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Unwin afforded the same protection to Johnson and Cowper, that in another generation the Duchess of Marlborough had afforded to Congreve, and the Duchess of Queensberry to Gay, it is certain that the contrast in the social status of the man of letters under Walpole's administration, and under Harley's, is at once as sudden as it is remarkable. Hitherto the personal condescension of the great had always compensated for the poverty of the learned. It forms not the least agreeable items in their biographies, that Chaucer could afford to speak of the time when he had his losengeours at the courts of Edward and Richard; and that Spenser, in the hour of his misfortune, could still boast poetically of his Prince's grace; and it is a redeeming point in his fame, that James, in spite of his arrogant pedantry, could descend to pen a complimentary autograph to the author of "Hamlet," and to treat Buchanan with almost the same familiarity that he allowed Steenie and Archie Armstrong to use towards himself. The graceful features of the son's character presented too great a contrast to his father's demeanour, for him to have been less courteous to the Cowleys and Seldens. Cromwell, indeed, did not regard the man of letters as a connoisseur so much as a politician. His Court was hardly a congenial atmosphere for the Muses. Yet Milton was his secretary, and Waller resided there as his cousin, and theatrical indulgence was granted to Davenant. Nor must that liberality pass unmentioned which pensioned Casaubon, though he would not write an answer to the "Eikon Basilike," and welcomed Harrington to Whitehall, though he was president of the

Rota Club and author of the "Oceana." The good-natured Charles's taste for the company of wits is as well known as his taste for women and spaniels. James's parsimony was notorious; but even the parsimony of James did not prevent him from compensating the compliments of Dryden with personal kindnesses, or paying the debts of the author of the "Plain Dealer." William treated poets as mere mechanics; yet his cold reserve was laid aside to welcome De Foe into his closet; and Narcissus Luttrell tells us he could so far appreciate the political value of poetry, as to order Congreve a hundred guineas for his poem on the Queen, and Cibber two hundred for a farce caricaturing the Nonjurors, to knight Blackmore for some secret service, and to put Steele down, according to his own account, in the last table-book he ever wrote, in return for his "Grief à la Mode."

Under Anne, in spite of the association of literature with politics, its treatment became more ceremonious; and on the accession of the House of Brunswick, etiquette so far widened the distance between it and the Court, that the by-stander marks it as a special sign of urbanity, when he hears Arbuthnot say that King George had read the "Dunciad," and been pleased to observe that Pope was a very honest man; or sees a princess invite Gay to read his tragedy, and pick him up when awe at her presence had precipitated him over the furniture; or watches his monarch holding a conversation with Johnson in the gallery of Whitehall, or deigning to express his opinion to Madame D'Arblay, on her last new novel.

The result, or it may be the partial origin, of this formal reflection on the profession of authorship, was a partition in the distribution of literature, a revolution in its composition and style. The *beau monde* acquired

a literature of its own, a literature of *belles lettres*, of a luxurious kind, taking no cognizance of the things of common life, and flourishing only in an exoteric atmosphere peculiar to itself. Its guiding principle was an entire devotion to the *To prepon*. Its themes were of a corresponding character. It indulged only in subjects of *virtù*. It was anecdotal, and it tells us how George I. revered vampires, and the Duchess of Kendal ravens. Or it was epistolary, and gave the gossip of the Grand Turk's Harem. Or it aspired to criticism, and took under its protection the crooked back of King Richard and the theology of King James. Or still more ambitious, it ventured on philosophy, and discussed the æsthetics of the ball-room and the dinner-table. The representatives of this fastidious literature modelled their demeanour to their topics. The gulf that existed between themselves and those who made no pretensions to rank with them, was distinctly acknowledged when Chesterfield repelled Johnson, and Walpole repudiated Chatterton. Their appreciation of their neighbours, and of their neighbours' productions, may be inferred from the lofty exclusiveness of their judgments. According to this supercilious code, the muse of Goldsmith smells too much of Southwark Fair to be tolerated; none but gentlemen like Etheridge and Sedley could write genteel comedy, and the comedy of "She Stoops to Conquer" is considerably below General Burgoyne's farce. In the same estimation Gibbon's Constantinopolitan History is a disgusting subject, and Robertson has great affectation of philosophy without success. Mrs. Macaulay, indeed, is Dame Thucydides, but then Mrs. Macaulay, we are told, kept two servants in laced liveries, assumed the air of a princess, and out-Cornelized the Cornelesians. It was a *scandalum magnatum* in the lower brood of authors to take liberties with the works or the names of the upper.

Johnson, who in another generation would have occupied a prominent chair among the aristocratic Deipnosophs of the Scriblerus Club, in his life of Lyttleton used the familiar term of "poor Lyttleton." Walpole tells us the consequence. Mrs. Montague declared she would never ask him to dinner again. It would be amusing indeed, if it were not provoking, to see how little of that toleration which was awarded to Mason and Gray was awarded to Johnson, and how little the ruder qualities of his manly nature were comprehended by the fine intellects whose knowledge of the world was almost confined to the artistic reunions of Strawberry Hill, and to Mrs. Montague's *bas bleu* meetings. Walpole, who is continually repudiating the character of an author to Lady Ossory, who calls Goldsmith a fool, scorns the idea of being elbowed by Scotch metaphysicians, or of admiring Akenside or the Rowleian manuscripts, or anything but Lord Hervey's verses, or Miss Knight's "Marcus Flaminius," styles him a sycophantic old nurse, and an unfortunate monster; sheds tears of laughter over every page of his published prayers; compares them to the diary of an old almswoman; attributes to him the bigotry of a monk, with his folly; and professes himself at a loss to understand, how such a man could set himself the penance of reading two hundred verses of the Bible *per diem*, or go through Vossius on Baptism in his dotage, when he had never read the Apocrypha, and only heard of the story of Bel and the Dragon in his boyhood. Chesterfield, whose unfeeling picture of poor Fielding every one knows, who had no kinder term for the author of "Humphrey Clinker" than a profligate hireling, had, if possible, still less sympathy for the poor creature who wrote "Rasselas" to bury his mother. In his memoirs, in a single breath, he calls him odious, mean, arrogant, self-sufficient, overbearing, and un-

grateful ; says that his manners were sordid and brutal, his style vicious and ridiculously bombastic, and his pedantry above a country schoolmaster's ; and elsewhere he describes him as a respectable Hottentot ; details for the amusement of his noble correspondent the mode in which he mangles everything he means to carve, and throws everything he means to drink everywhere but down his throat ; and, in a paper in the "World" (100), does not hesitate pointedly to recommend to his notice the more polished and genteeler parts of our language, in terms that meant that politeness and gentility were not characteristic of the atmosphere in which Johnson moved.

The spirit that dictated this discourtesy, though it specially marked the schism in literature, the divorce between literature and patronage, was not confined to any particular era or any particular class. It does not appear that patronage had much to do with regulating the tone of social intercourse among authors. The hostilities of such Crispinuses as the Settles and Crownes may now and then have been promoted by a Rochester, but as a general rule the Milbournes and Dennises required no adventitious encouragement. The quarrels of authors constitute as prominent a page as their calamities. The effusions of the satiric muse supply as many ornaments as the epic or lyric. The personalities of the literary history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in particular have invested its literature with something of that antiquarian interest, that attaches itself to the feuds of a Norman baron or a Highland thane, or to the hereditary ill-humour of the Capulets. Its degradation to the prosaic associations of a mere commerce, and its identification with those trade artifices which from time to time produced the Lauders, Macphersons, and Irelands, render these animosities more

provoking to the curiosity. Tonson bargaining with Dryden for verses at sixpence a line, Curl accusing Pope of poisoning him, Pope walking the lanes of Richmond with loaded firearms in his pockets, Johnson knocking down Osborne with one of his own folios,¹ Churchill and his oaken flail, Philips and his birchen rod, are scenes and episodes not readily realized by the student of a later epoch, whose propriety has never been shocked by any catastrophe more fatal than the report of "Little's leadless pistol," who has never read anything more severe than the "Pursuits of Literature" or "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," and who, on the other hand, has seen the publication of a popular history arrest the traffic of streets, and peacefully monopolize the attention of a nation.

It was the misfortune of the subject of this Essay, that he was born in such a state of things. They were not calculated, it must be confessed, to have a beneficial influence even on the most favourable disposition. They were least calculated to chasten and correct the ungenial disposition of such a man as Pope. And yet the boyhood of Pope gave no promise of such a bitter harvest. Indeed, there are no more pleasant associations attached to the early days of any literary man, not even to Milton's, than there are to the years spent at Binfield. No one who had watched that pale and languid form tending his favourite cypresses, or gliding with his mother among the stately beeches of Windsor, or submitting his paraphrases of Thomas à Kempis to the criticism of his father, could have foreseen the author of the severest satire in the language, or could have predicted that the destined owner of Twickenham should

¹ The identical book which Johnson used on this occasion was still in notorious preservation in the year 1812, when Nichols saw it in the possession of a bookseller at Cambridge.—Nichols, viii, p. 446.

have so little claim in honesty, candour, and all the nobler parts, to be ranked with the Bard of Horton. The contrast between Pope the boy and Pope the man is so great, so sudden, that ordinary attempts at elucidation are useless. The transformation which the spear of Ithuriel effected on the disguise of Satan was not more marvellous or more complete.

Nor is there any accounting for the change in the force of circumstances. Poverty, the general plea for all the distempers of genius, could not be produced in his case. With the prospect of a fair inheritance on his father's demise, he was receiving *billets doux* from duchesses, and exchanging visits with the Roman Catholic squires of Oxford and Sussex, while Budgell was struggling with the rapids of London Bridge, and Savage was preparing for Gloucester Gaol. In London, young as he was, he had been introduced at the clubs, had dined with Addison at Buttons', had been kindly noticed in the "Spectator," publicly complimented by Wycherley, and stood well as a promising hand among the booksellers. The publication of the "Rape of the Lock," had startled a generation still convulsed by the "Dispensary" of Garth, and had already brought him into favourable comparison with the author of the "Lutrin" and the "Secchia Rapita." Walsh, whom Dryden characterized as one of the best critics of the age, but who was in reality only a better sort of Rymer, had spoken of him in the same breath with Virgil. His prospects, as far as supremacy in his own walk was concerned, were most reassuring. The course was clear to him. There was not a single competitor whom he could not have easily distanced. Johnson, indeed, had lately taken up his abode in London, but his name was hardly known beyond the precincts of his bookseller's counting-house. He had not written his

“London” before Pope had written his “Dunciad.” Addison, indeed, might have afforded him some apprehension. The simile of the “Angel” was in the mouth of every honest Whig, and his pastoral translations from the “Georgics” had aroused the despairing emulation of Dryden. But Addison was nearly twenty years his senior, and belonged to the generation that was going out, rather than to the generation that was coming in. Wycherley, whose handsome face had once recommended him to the voluptuous Castlemaine, was compensating for a youth of debauchery by an old age of dotage, and Steele was far too irregular a genius seriously to be dreaded as a rival. Swift was giving up to party what was meant for mankind. Philips had published his “Pastorals,” but then Philips was only known by the name of Namby Pamby, which those “Pastorals” obtained for him. Young was busy in that career of prostitution, which even the publication of the “Night Thoughts,” twenty years after, has hardly excused. Churchill was still engaged in preaching and selling cider to his Welsh parishioners. Akenside did not publish his great work on the “Pleasures of the Imagination” till Pope had scarcely breath left to praise it. Pope was, in fact, on Addison’s demise, the heir presumptive to the throne of literature. Nevertheless, we find him, almost at the very threshold of his existence, earning for himself a most unenviable notoriety in the “History of the Quarrels of Authors,” and through all his life betraying a most unseemly anxiety to maintain what nobody could seriously have attempted to deprive him of, pre-eminence and fame. His life, indeed, was one long tissue of conspiracies, of gratuitous efforts to build up his own reputation on the ruin of other people’s. His literary religion seems to have been borrowed from the Court of Valhalla. He appeared to be always acting under the impression

that the attainment of renown could only be acquired by the destruction of his enemies, and that the road to immortality could never be reached unless it were paved with their brainless skulls. One of his earliest pieces, his "Essay on Criticism," published at an age when few have so far forgotten the gentle lessons of childhood to learn the language of scorn with such cordiality, was so full of personalities, that Addison, though he paid ready testimony to its promise of talent, could not forbear from giving a gentle reproof to the animus displayed in its composition.

To that animus, indeed, Addison himself was soon to be sacrificed. The portrait of Atticus and its origin are so familiar, and the conclusions it suggests have been so uniformly disparaging to the temper of Pope, that any inquiry into its details, undisturbed as they are by any new evidence, would hardly repay the pains of perusal. It is only sufficient to say that Addison had more than once unwittingly offended Pope's pride; that he now added a new cause of anger by a reported depreciation of Pope's translation of Homer, in favour of a projected translation by Tickell; and that Pope accused him of plotting, in conjunction with Tickell, against his fame,—to see at once the grounds of Addison's offence and of Pope's accusation. Conjecture, indeed, may possibly acquit Pope of a splenetic fabrication. There is no doubt, without placing any emphatic reliance on Spence's testimony, that Addison was jealous of any literary rivalry. There is more than one authenticated anecdote of his sensitiveness on this score. That he wrote the translation of the "Iliad" in question is undoubtedly false; that he corrected it, largely and laboriously, was the testimony of the manuscript. What more reasonable than that he should have taken pains in forwarding what he had so large a share in creating;

and that his efforts to forward it should have been reported by some Mallet or other to Pope, in terms exaggerated enough to make it appear that those efforts were in reality directed against Pope. That Addison should have associated himself in a league of offence with such things as the Gildons, is as unlikely as that Shakspeare should have formed a combination against Decker with the wretches whom Jonson places among the crowds in St. Paul's aisle, and Hall makes to dine with Duke Humphrey. On the other hand, that Tickell published his translation of the "Iliad" only as a specimen of his ability for the "Odyssey," is, to use the remark of Jervas and Fortescue, who may be considered as representing one shade of public opinion on the matter, "almost as improbable as that Gay should have published the first book of the 'Odyssey,' to bespeak the favour of the town for a translation of Statius."

Not that I wish to join in the vulgar adulation of Addison's character. After the most serious consideration, it is my unbiassed opinion that, in the contemplation of that character, certain veins of temperament which traverse his composition obliquely, have been wilfully or negligently passed by. Addison all through life was influenced visibly, I think, by his natural taste, hitherto strangely overlooked, for the clerical profession. He had designed to take orders, we are told, in his earlier days; and it is certain that if he had not been a Minister in the State, he would have been a Minister in the Church. As Secretary he did the duties of a Bishop, defended his religion against the Freethinkers, published "Evidences of Christianity," and premeditated a translation of the "Psalms." Nor could any one who ever compared the "Examiner" with the "Spectator" deny that he was a fitter aspirant for the lawn than Swift. Old Jacob Tonson, who had no love for him, used to say, he ever

thought him a priest at heart.¹ His character, accordingly, suggests rather piety than generosity. There was nothing to indicate, either in his actions or in his demeanour, a manly, confident, outspoken nature. He was, on the contrary, shy and diffident, and he seems to have contracted a habit, common to the shy and diffident, of hesitation, circumlocution, and reserve, not really inconsistent with good-nature, but very often in the mind of the man of the world mistaken for malice. On literary matters especially, his decision was given with a hesitation that more than one of his audience have attributed to jealousy. It is easy to see how a man like Pope would translate a stutter or a lisp. Faint praise was as caustic as open enmity to one so sensitive to either. In addition to the mere physical formalities of demeanour, tradition quite as authentic as that by which we are guided in our judgment of Johnson, or of Pope himself, has come down to us of Addison, which irresistibly conveys the impression of a mind anxiously tenacious of its own property. It is a common thing to see a person, nervous about his own rights, claim them with a reduplicated earnestness, that a self-composed man would consider superfluous. This species of analogous emphatic self-appropriation marked the conduct of Addison. He had not, I believe, at the bottom any literary greed, though his enemies describe him as over solicitous of praise and fame. But, whatever he did, he seems to have eventually claimed. His deficiency was in his manner of claiming it. He whispered, where he should have spoken out. He shuffled, when he should have been erect. A bad interpretation was therefore put on this awkwardness. His mode of praising was thought to be only a cryptic mode of damning. He was not chary of his literary assistance to others, but his mode of

¹ Spence's "Lit. Anec." 151, and *ibid.* 248. 261.

urging a debt involved so much clumsy finesse, that every one who could not comprehend him, cried shame on his underhandedness. One meets with people every day, who do a kindness with the air of men incurring an obligation, or who demand the return of a due with the trepidation of robbers. Some such interpretation, I believe, must be put on Addison's conduct to Steele, and, with some modification, to Pope.

To prolong the discussion ; Addison was not a companionable, social, or genial man. He possessed a sense of rectitude, an uneasy sense of the claims of moral propriety, which would allow of no cordiality with his associates. Intellectually, on the other hand, there was sufficient affinity to close the tie of brotherhood. His nature, already timorous, was thus drawn both ways : while one part of it felt the influence of attraction, the other part, awkwardly enough, acknowledged the influence of repulsion. If his mind made any advance towards assimilation with others, his conscience interfered to counteract the intimacy. He might be willing to appear cordial. He could not help appearing reserved. A timid man is always a suspicious man. He sees daggers in the air. He invents hostilities. He anticipates enemies, and by this means he very often makes them. For, as a general rule, a suspicious man is a suspected one. His behaviour rouses the attention of the observer, and attention soon gives place to conviction. He is first the object of scrutiny, and then the object of mistrust. This is the process by which the dubious man becomes doubted. And by some such process as this his associates were regarded by Addison, and Addison by his associates. It is easy to see why Steele formed an exception, though even Steele's reverence and attachment were not always proof against his friend's mysterious behaviour. Steele's was a large-hearted,

generous, impulsive nature. He had not a particle of suspicion in him. He had, in fact, what never co-exists in a suspicious nature, a keen sense of his own great delinquencies. He was eager, therefore, to acknowledge superiority, and to profit by it. He saw the generally equable, upright, steadfast tenure of Addison's conduct, and he clung to him accordingly with something of the tenacity with which a parasite clings to the unmoved trunk. That Addison's conduct sometimes puzzled him it is true, but he was not the man to scrutinize keenly the motives of a friend, and not till that friend's conduct became really or apparently inexplicable, were his doubts excited. But any discussion in Pope's favour, it must be owned, is considerably impaired by the general tenor of his conduct. There were very few of his friends whom his ill-judged jealousy or his suspicious temper did not convert into enemies before he died. Nay, he is among the few instances of those whose fate it has been to exchange the friendship of a lifetime for posthumous enmity. Among his earliest aristocratic acquaintance was Lady Mary Wortley Montague, the wittiest woman of her day, without pedantry, yet of parts sufficiently superior to the ordinary herd of her contemporaries to receive special homage among the poets and patriots of the Kit Cat. To her intellectual and personal attractions Pope paid the most assiduous court. His letters convey sentiments couched in language that in a period of less high-flown gallantry, or from any other person, might have met with a more ridiculous penalty than laughter and neglect. And yet before he died he made the object of this romantic passion the victim of lampoons so gross, that it does not exaggerate their character to say he lived to be ashamed of republishing them. Philips, one of his earliest associates, he caricatured under the guise of a friendly criticism, and concluded by treat-

ing him with particular virulence to the end of his days. He even suspected Swift, quarrelled with his humble Allen, and went so far as to call Warburton, who had defended his "Essay on Man" against Crousay, a sneaking fellow. If he was indebted to any man, bound to him by the ties of honour and gratitude, he was to Bolingbroke. Spenser had not received such kindness or such condescension from Surrey. Yet every one knows how he treated Bolingbroke; and that all the time Bolingbroke was supplying him with hints for his poems and plans for his grottoes, he was privately printing off a surreptitious edition of Bolingbroke's works.

There was one aggravating feature attached to his enmities. He never would confess them. Nothing could induce him to take off the mask. Detection robbed revenge of half its sweetness, and accordingly he descended to every contrivance rather than be detected. The distinction he recognized to Martha Blount, between telling a lie and "equivocating genteelly," provided him with no difficult means of concealment. In an Horatian dialogue, he repeated his slanders on Lady Montague in an indecent couplet. The whole town recognized her as Sappho. Through the intervention of Lord Peterborough she solicited an explanation. An explanation in the way of an acknowledgment, Pope might easily have afforded. Though the days of personal retaliation had not yet quite gone by, it was not probable that Lady Mary would have employed any more formidable weapon than a counter-lampoon. Yet he impudently denied any allusion to his fair antagonist, protested that he had never applied the name in verse or prose, that some one had invented a false story to support a false accusation, and that he only spoke of such Sapphos as imitate more the lewdness than the genius of the ancient one. The epistle on the

"Use of Riches" contained a pointed satire against the Duke of Chandos. No one could have blamed him for exemplifying the contrast between true grandeur and false magnificence. His enemies asserted that he was under an obligation to the Duke, and that such ingratitude was a poor return for a gift of 500*l*. This, however, he took care stoutly to deny, yet though he denied this, he would not bring himself to confess that Timon's villa meant canons. In his "Treatise on Bathos" he had put Aaron Hill, one of the least influential, but not the least serviceable and intelligent, of his friends among the "Flying Fishes," and afterwards found him a place in the "Dunciad." Now, the allusion to Hill in the "Dunciad" was rather of a flattering character than otherwise. Pope himself owned as much. Yet, when Hill taxed him with the personality, in both instances under the disguise of initials, he would not own that the initials were intended for Hill, assured him that the letters in the "Bathos" were set at random, that he was weary of telling a great truth, that he was not the author of the notes to the "Dunciad," and that he would use his influence with the editor to get the offensive note expunged. Dennis had written some harsh remarks on Pope's "Essay on Criticism." Pope had satirized him under the name of Appius, and otherwise subjected him to the grossest ridicule. Yet on a certain occasion he is hypocrite enough to write to Hill, that he was never angry with a criticism of Mr. Dennis on his poetry, and that if he could do Mr. Dennis a service to-morrow, he would. Theobald had attempted to palm off a play of the "Fatal Falsehood," as Shakspeare's. Pope put him into the "Treatise on Bathos." Theobald remonstrated through the medium of Hill. Once more Pope writes to Hill, that he never meant anything by it, that he did not suppose the play to be Theobald's, but that he (Theobald)

gave it as Shakspeare's, and that he (Pope) took it of that age, and that he did not write the "Treatise on Bathos," or most of it, but Arbuthnot. In his famous satire on Woman he had condensed all the failings of the Duchess of Marlborough into his character of Atossa. It was reported among those who had every authority for the report, that he had received a thousand pounds to suppress it, yet he asserted the original to be the Duchess of Buckingham. He flattered Parnell, and abused him behind his back. He flattered Hughes, and owned to Swift that he was but a poor mediocrist.

This peculiar temperament, acting on a body naturally irritable, and having for an ally an intellect naturally keen and penetrating, led him from time to time into a course of duplicity so obscure, that the disentanglement of the details of his biography from the folds in which he has involved them, is still a puzzle to the most enterprising biographer. It is perfectly bewildering to unravel the web of stratagem which he has wove about him. Lady Bolingbroke said, and said truly, that he would play the politician about cabbages and turnips. One of the strongest features in his character was his intellectual ambition, a passion for literary success. Most of his egotism centred on this point. Once or twice, indeed, in spite of his infirmities, there peeps out in his letters a little personal vanity, as when he insinuates to Teresa Blount that some women like men of his make. But this failing seldom went beyond a deprecatory allusion to himself, or an anxiety about his sword and knee-buckles, or a pardonable desire to let his friends know how he walked with Mrs. Lepel by moonlight in the gardens of Hampton Court, or how Lady Cox mixed his electuary, Lady Codrington pounded his sulphur, and Mrs. Bridget Bethel brewed his broth; and was entirely absorbed in his restless itch for notoriety. To obtain this, he involved

himself in all kinds of perplexities. One of his capital engines was the "Grub Street Journal," by means of which, by the aid of anonymous letters, advertisements, fictitious compliments and fictitious threats, he contrived to keep his name continually before the town. And one of his capital artifices was to feign a piracy on his own works, excite curiosity by a feigned prosecution, and then to publish what he was pleased to term a true and genuine edition in his own defence. This, there is now very little doubt, is the true explanation of that mysterious tale connected with Curl's publication of his letters. Pope wished to publish his correspondence. But he wished, too, to prepare the public for its reception by a little preliminary agitation. Accordingly he got some of his minions to take charge of the manuscript, drop down the Thames to Southwark, and enter into negotiation with Curl. Curl, a perfect Helluo after that kind of game, after a time consented. The bait took. The bookseller put out an advertisement for an edition of Pope's correspondence with the Earls of Halifax, Burlington, and others, and was duly summoned before the Lords for infringement of their privileges. Within two months subscriptions for an authentic edition at a guinea a volume were issued by the poet.

The evidence against Pope has, in process of time, so accumulated under the diligent researches of biographer after biographer, that it is necessary to compress the materials for judgment into the smallest compass. The outlines of the case so compressed run thus. In 1733, Curl advertised a Life of Pope, and solicited through the same medium any genealogical information on the subject of his advertisement. He soon receives a communication signed P. T., containing among other things a sketch of Pope's family,—the very counterpart in some of its details to one which Pope himself had given in a

note to the Epistle to Arbuthnot,—and an offer of further information relative to his life. To this offer, Curl replies, and a second letter from the anonymous P. T. parenthetically suggests the publication of a certain collection of the poet's letters, which had fallen into his hand, in the form of a five-shilling volume. For more than two years Curl apparently hesitates to take any notice of the suggestion, and at the expiration of that period transmits the communication of P. T. to Pope. Pope immediately disclaims all collusion or dealings with Curl or his correspondent, doubts that the latter has any collection he pretends to, expresses a belief that the whole thing is a forgery, and—itsself a very suspicious indifference—asserts that he shall not trouble himself about it. P. T., roused by Pope's disclaimer, once more appears on the stage, accuses Curl of betraying him, stoutly maintains the genuineness of his copies, offers to meet Curl at the Rose Tavern, and lay before him the printed sheets, and concludes by countermanding the interview on the plea he might be assaulted by Pope's Twitnam bravos. How Pope was to know of the meeting in which he had no share, was, as Curl said, the cream of the jest. In compensation, however, for the disappointment, an emissary of P. T., in the guise of a grotesque compound of the barrister and priest, calling himself Smith, visits Curl at his own house late in the night, shows him a copy of the book in sheets, with about a dozen of the original letters, promises the whole at their next meeting, and by dint of more promises induces Curl, after another diplomatic communication from P. T., to advertise the volume. The original manuscripts in the meantime had not been delivered, and it was not till some period had elapsed after the advertisement alluded to had appeared in the "Post Boy," that Curl received them out of the hands of two porters,—who, according to

Smith, had come by water,—and paid his money only to find a large default in his bargain. The catastrophe has been already hinted at. It happened that the Bookseller's Bill, otherwise entitled an Act for the better Encouragement of Learning, came on that very day in the House of Lords. The strange nature of the advertisement had not escaped the notice of some of its advocates, and a clause to prevent such an enormous licence for the future was suggested. As the advertisement pretended to publish the answers of Pope's noble correspondents, it was considered a breach of the Standing Order of the House, and Black Rod was put in motion. Curl was arrested, ordered to attend before the Upper House, and in his extremity cautioned by P. T. and Smith to divulge nothing that had passed. On an examination of the books before the Lords they were found to contain not a single letter from a single peer.

Never was plot more clumsily contrived, or more clumsily carried out. Pope, among his other failings, possessed, as has been shown, no small share of literary vanity. Though he was always repudiating, with an effrontery that would have set ill on Walpole, the "noisy praises" of fame, no literary epicure ever tricked out his entertainments with a keener view to his reputation. He was continually retouching and recasting. He recast his "Rape of the Lock." He put his "Essay on Man" through a course of sixteen months' elaboration, and then by way of gauging the public favour published it as another's, with an impudent preface alluding to himself as the "noted author." The manuscripts of his "Homer" prove that he bestowed as much pains on it as Thomson ever did on his "Seasons." The "Dunciad," as might have been expected, was continually undergoing some alteration or revision. What he was displeased with he disowned, suppressed, and

sometimes fathered on Gay and Savage. To suit the generation for whom they were written, his letters were composed with a labour that Lyttelton would hardly have given to his "History." The good thing that was sent to Lord Bolingbroke by this mail, was sent to Lady Montague by the next, and to Martha Blount by the following. To suit the palates of posterity they were rewritten, remodelled, expurgated, and condensed, till their original significance was almost sublimated. Unhappily this anxious management it is that has helped to criminate him. Subsequent comparison has shown, that between the surreptitious edition published by Curl and the authentic edition published by himself, both in point of omissions and interpolations, the most complete identity exists. It is hardly after this worth while adding, that the very year Curl had the mysterious offer made him, that very year Pope withdrew his deposit of letters from the library of Lord Oxford.

It must be observed, what has been generally overlooked, that the publication of literary correspondence formed no unimportant item in the sum of an author's achievements, and was not so triflingly estimated in Pope's time as in our own. Association with the countrymen of Balzac and Voltaire had considerably raised the value of that species of composition in public estimation, even since Dryden's time. Most of the *dilettanti* of the day wrote for a purpose, and even Swift set so much by his letters as to keep copies of them. Shenstone goes so far as to tell us that he valued his more than all his poetry. Accordingly, it may help to account for Pope's anxiety, when it is remembered that the name of Lady Mary Montague would hardly have been known but for her putative epistolary achievements, and that Walpole, in spite of his pretended indifference, would hardly have been otherwise preserved from

oblivion, even by his "Castle of Otranto." But besides all this, the cry of "Wolf!" was no uncommon stratagem of Pope. Once before, in his preface to the third volume of his "Miscellanies," he accuses the booksellers of ransacking the closets of the sick, and breaking open the cabinets of the dead, to procure their private papers, though Parnell, Rowe, Addison, and Garth, had died without undergoing any such posthumous penalty. And again, in the case of the "Dunciad," he talks with the utmost seriousness of pirated editions, printed in Ireland, which never existed anywhere but in his own inventive imagination. The fact is, piracy was no uncommon resource of his own. He was justly suspected of having a hand in the surreptitious publication of Lady Montague's "Eclogues," and more than suspected of printing a clandestine edition of Lord Bolingbroke's "Patriot King."

The intercourse of Curl with Pope is very suggestive of the relation which the bookseller before the nineteenth century bore to the book-maker. Every one has heard of the contract for poetry which Tonson made with Dryden at so much a line, and the story that Johnson told Nichols, that Cave, who was considered a generous paymaster, always bargained for lines by the hundred, and generally expected the long hundred. Literature, in fact, was reduced to a mere commerce, and the making of books to a trade on the same terms as the making of houses. Authors and critics were as purchaseable commodities as carpenters and bricklayers. A swarm of hacks arose at the bidding of the speculative bookseller, translators who did not know Greek from Hebrew, and critics whom a slice of pudding in the back parlour would propitiate for ever. It would be easy to foresee the effects of such a state of things, if the remains of what was the popular literature of the day did not embody them. Dryden complained that the inferiority

of the English to the French translations was owing to the booksellers. They cared little how the business was done, provided it was done. They lived by selling titles, not books.¹ These titular puffs, reprobated by Swift, and ridiculed by Arbuthnot, formed by no means the only machinery of imposition. A spirit of interest, or a dearth of original material, stimulated the booksellers generally to recover old national authors. From the laboratory of Curl alone some of our most valuable antiquarian authorities, such as Aubrey and Ashmole, had appeared. This scheme, a purely commercial one, was conducted in a purely commercial spirit. To carry it out, two evils were introduced, the one involving the other, a system of subscription, and a system of advertisement, of a character unknown to the bibliopolical history of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the manœuvring exercised would now disgrace a quack-medicine vendor, and would scarcely be countenanced by the least respectable journal. A book was advertised to catch the eye of subscribers before it went to press. A flaring prospectus was offered to the unwary reader of the "Post-boy." The proposals were ludicrously minute. The size of the work, the number of sheets, the quality of paper, the price, were all as minutely detailed as though the work were really in the hands of the printer, or even conceived in the author's brain. No circumstantiality was omitted. Sometimes the copies of proposals alone would have made a volume. One author, we find from Nichols, circulated no less than 8,650.² It not unfrequently happened that the book thus proposed was never commenced, or, if commenced, never completed. Johnson tells us of one Cooke, who translated Hesiod, and lived twenty years on a translation of Plautus, for which he was always taking subscrip-

¹ Dryden's "Life of Lucian." ² "Literary Illustrations," vol. ii. p. 108.

tions. The subscribers, indeed, were generally the sufferers. Sometimes, if the subscription was low, it was not thought worth while returning it. Such sums as five shillings or seven shillings were not expected to be applied for.¹ The tricks of the booksellers would have disgraced a modern Art Union. In the case of Du Halde's "China," reported by Nichols,² it was gravely proposed that all the profits of the work should be divided away among the subscribers, or that fifty pounds should be dedicated as an art prize, or that all the profits should be divided among the first thousand subscribers by lot, or that all copies remaining unsold at the conclusion of the work should be put up to auction, and the produce be awarded by the mathematical engines to the fortunate ticket-holders. Sometimes the bookseller, mistrustful of the real author's fame, purchased a more notorious prefix for the occasion. One hundred guineas was the price sometimes exacted by the putative author. The "Lives of the Poets," which pass for Cibber's, for example, was really written by an amanuensis of Johnson, named Robert Shiels, and Cibber, who was then in the King's Bench, received ten guineas. A double literary fraud in this instance was intended. It was ambiguously printed "Mr. Cibber," that the title might pass for Colley Cibber, instead of his son Theophilus. A translation of Lucian was commonly called Dryden's, from a sense of justice to some bookseller who had paid a sum of money for the poet's name. Pope was charged with lending the booksellers his name for his "Shakspeare," to promote the credit of an exorbitant subscription.³ As good an example of the

¹ Nichols, vol. ii. p. 628.

² Vol. v. p. 46.

³ Nichols, ii. p. 761. It will save specific references to state at once that nearly all the examples produced on this subject are given from Nichols, in whose not very provoking mass of literary correspondence and illustrations they lie half buried.

evils of the system may be found in the account of Stackhouse's negotiations for printing the history of the Bible. A curious stratagem founded on this practice was resorted to by the eccentric Wortley Montague to obtain a temporary supply. A work on the rise and fall of the Roman empire, really written by his tutor, was published with the name of Montague on the title-page. Old Montague, seeing the advertisement, sent for his son, and gave him a hundred-pound note, promising him a similar present for each new edition.¹

Surreptitious publications of authors' property were not uncommon. Johnson was treated as Pope is said to have been treated by Curl. During his absence in Scotland, Tom Davies collected his *Miscellaneous Pieces*, and published them in two volumes, by the author of the "Rambler," without his knowledge. Burke commenced a suit against Owen for even yet greater treachery and impudence. Indeed this peculiar morality was not confined to the trade in England. It was the boast of the Irish booksellers that they could procure from any printing-office in London sheets of any book printing in it before publication. Richardson's "Sir Charles Grandison" was thus pirated, in spite of every precaution. The treachery of the Dublin booksellers in this instance extended to Scotland, and it was even proposed to send a pirated copy to France, for translation. It was the practice in Germany, France, Holland, and Switzerland to publish a description of such sharks, to engrave their features, and to distribute them among the printing-houses. A sort of Coventry was inflicted on them by the honest journeymen of the trade, and even burial was denied to them. The custom of spurious impressions began early. In a paper printed in 1663, an advertise-

¹ A London publisher advertised a life of the King by Robert Southy, hoping to evade the law by the misspelt name.

ment occurs warning the public against a false and imperfect copy of a poem called "Hudibras," as a cheat designed to abuse both buyer and author.

It was not always thus nefarious in the trade. The upper classes of booksellers were a superior set. Their wit, their scholarship, their bookish knowledge, and their knowledge of men, made their houses more frequented than taverns or coffee-houses. In the middle of the seventeenth century, Roger North tells us, men went to Little Britain as regularly as they went to market, and the name of Bowyer would alone redeem the profession in the eighteenth century. Indeed the success of some printing establishments might well raise a feeling of historical envy in the Row itself. It was an ordinary affair for printers and publishers to become aldermen, city councillors, and freemen of the city. One printer, Strahan, rose to be a M.P., and had Charles James Fox for his colleague; one received the honour of knighthood, and one rolled in his gilt chariot as Lord Mayor. One could afford to have his hunters, and to run down a stag with Majesty. The account of Lord Mayor Barber's reception at Versailles, on a hunting visit to France, is still to be met with in the newspapers of the time. In the eyes of such men the author was something more than the under-agent to the bookseller, as Steevens happily terms it in the preface to his "Shakspeare," and, on the whole, experienced far other treatment to that which Dryden, for instance, suffered from Tonson, though Tonson died worth 100,000*l.*, and could afford to leave a will of twenty-seven pages. The speculative and grasping spirit of booksellers indeed not uncommonly overreached itself, and it frequently happened that when subscribers came to be verified, nine out of ten were, as the phrase went, "men of buckram." Nor was the morality among the purchasing much better

than that of the manufacturing community. A book on the publisher's counter does not always seem to have been safe from mutilation at the hands of any physician who wanted a recipe, or any scholar who wanted a quotation. One of the most respectable booksellers in Little Britain, Bateman by name, who had Swift for a customer, would never suffer any one to look into a book in his shop, and when asked, would say, "I suppose you may be a doctor or an author; and if you buy the book, I will engage it to be perfect before you leave me, but not after, as I have had leaves torn out and books returned, to my great loss and prejudice."

It is an observation of Pope, recorded by Spence, that poetry is capable of being divided into schools as well as painting, and that we might discern schools of the poets as distinctly as schools of the painters. Without assigning the origin of the remark to Pope, the principle that prompted it has long exercised a prejudicial influence on poetical criticism, and still holds its ground among a certain class of minds. It has been the fashion to talk of Chaucer and Spenser as belonging to the Italian school, though it is evident that Chaucer and Spenser, save in the choice of their materials, were no more of the Italian than Virgil or Statius were of the Grecian, or Byron or Moore of the Oriental school. Pope himself, and Dryden by the same test, have been catalogued among the French school of poets, though Dryden declared to Bolingbroke that he drew more of his criticism from Spain than from France, and though Pope was so notoriously unproficient a student of French as hardly to be able to speak it. The use of French words in the poems of Dryden proves nothing to the supremacy of French taste. They are rather the relics of that quaint habit which besprinkled the works of Chaucer and Shakspeare with Gallicisms, and of almost all the poets and dra-

matists up to Cowley and Dryden.¹ The "Rape of the Lock" would have been published, had Boileau never discussed the laws of harmony or written the "Lutrin," and "Cato" would still have observed the unities without Racine or Voltaire. The same spirit of generalization led Madame de Stael to confine the epithets "classic" and "romantic" to her divisions of modern poetry, though it is evident the "Odyssey" for example had as much claim to the one title or the other as the "Franciad." Hume, I am inclined to think, inadvertently gave a much more philosophic explanation for the appearance of such a phenomenon as Pope, when he wrote in his "Essays" that an excess of refinement is an extreme which most men are apt to fall into, after learning has made great progress, and after eminent writers have appeared in every species of composition.

The appearance of Pope was, in fact, the natural result of the operation of the law, which attributes to the imagination the priority of development over the reason. It is on this principle no accidental relation or proportion that the poetical interval between Chaucer and Pope bears to the chronological. The history of English poetry during that interval is as much the history of progressive refinement as the history of social manners, and

¹ Though accused of introducing French terms, Dryden was keenly alive to the inferiority of the French language for the purposes of the epic. "Their language," he writes, in his "Discourse on Epic Poetry," "is not strung with sinews like our English. It has the nimbleness of a greyhound, but not the bulk or body of a mastiff. Our men and our verses overbear them by their weight. *Pondere non numero* is the English motto." Though Johnson, in his preface to the "Dictionary," apprehended that the licence of translators would soon reduce us to babble a dialect of France, in his "Life of Dryden" he acknowledged that few of the French words which the poet allowed, had been incorporated or retained in our language. It should seem, indeed, that Dryden himself rather obeyed than gave an impulse to the taste of the age, in the fashionable Gallomania. In his preface to "All for Love," he distinctly says, "I should not have troubled myself thus far with French poets but that I find our Chedreux critics wholly form their judgment by them."

the "Essay on Criticism" and the "Essay on Man" are as much the legitimate climacterics of the one as the Habeas Corpus and the Bill of Rights are of the other. Poetry, in truth, has its ancestors as well as Liberty, and its genealogical epochs have each their several characteristics and their several representatives. The degeneracy from epic simplicity to philosophic embellishment was consummated, not at a moment, but only by a long series of graduation. Pope was only the poetical successor of Dryden. Dryden, if he did not inherit the disfigurements, inherited the aims of the metaphysical poets, and the metaphysical poets were born when Surrey, the Granville of a former age, as Pope called him, anticipated the Granville of a later, by permitting his muse to prolong the conceits of Vacluse. The reign of Dryden, moreover, was on the decline. If we are to believe Spence, and the insinuation of Dennis, a clique mustered round Addison and Steele to depreciate him.¹ Prior, while yet a Whig, had satirized the "guilty Bayes" in his "Modern Translators." Rowe, in a poetical epistle published a few years before his death, upbraided the generation which had suffered him to write on, in spite of sense.

On the other hand, the history of English poetry after Pope, is the history of a great poetical reaction against that demoralization of which Pope is the exponent. The counter revolution was in its turn a gradual one. Its approach was heralded by unmistakable signs. The publication of "Chevy Chase" and "John Gilpin," was one archæological protest in its favour. The publication of "Ossian's Poems" and the "Rowleian Manuscripts" was another. When it did come, its violence showed the precipitance with which the public mind recurred to the models of antiquity. It

¹ See Dennis's Letter to Tonson—"Maloniana."

may be easily imagined what favours a poet, whose muse was dedicated to the rough exploits of Border Outlaws, would have received from a generation that had rejected the "Percy Reliques" and the Runic Odes of Gray, or how the courtly rhymesters of Buttons' would have stared to hear a ploughman entrancing the town with melodies of Dorian sweetness, such as the classic pipe of Pan never uttered.

The name of Cowper has generally been prominently associated with the revolution that followed the poetical supremacy of Pope. Perhaps, no one of his contemporaries was better adapted for the post. I do not speak of Cowper's bodily and moral existence—of that long and dismal existence, worn out with the alternate horrors of self-conviction and self-penitence, and finally expiring between the harsh pietism of an eccentric minister, and the Madame Guyonism of a still more eccentric woman. I refer to his intellectual education. His mind had no preconceived models to mar its originality. He had always had a rather fastidious aversion to imitation. He had not read a line of English poetry since he was a boy. He had not so much as heard of Collins. He adored Churchill, and Churchill hated Pope. If he had any other early predilection, it was in favour of Prior, of the "Hudibras" and the "Splendid Shilling." There was in addition to this a singular perverseness in the public decision with regard to poetry, not at all unlikely to provoke a protest from an original imagination. A most adverse judgment had gone out generally against the elder poets, or against those who were not copyists of the younger generation in fashion. The monthly Reviewers had called for a translation of Spenser into modern English. Mason had ranked, in one of his puerile poems, Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton, below Pope, though he lived to know better. Gray and Mason

had been laughed at, and Cowper himself had been among the laughers. Collins's odes encumbered his bookseller's shelves. Mallet's recommendation could do nothing for Thomson's "Winter." Indeed, a very open war had been declared against descriptive poetry. The monthly reviewers had written, that "with regard to the moralizing of rural paintings, it is almost always attended with quaintness, and a forced manner. The descriptive poet should leave the discovery of his moral to the sagacity of his readers." Jeffrey could not have said more to the Lake school. Such was the state of things when the "Task" appeared. Like every poem of note since Pope's time, if we except Falconer's "Shipwreck," it was composed in blank verse. Blank verse, indeed, at heart Cowper disliked. It is more difficult, he wrote, and not so amusing. It was not without some opposition that his claims as a poetical reformer were recognized. Men who had just come fresh from Glover's "Athenaid," or who, like Gibbon and Miss Seward, thought the "Essay on Epic Poetry" and the "Triumph of Temper" were the only things worth having since Pope, could not accommodate their theory of poetry to the devotional seriousness and the dry humour of the "Task" or the "Retirement." The "Critical Review" openly preferred his lighter pieces, the "Rose" and the "Nightingale," to "such long moral lectures," and owned that they were evidently best adapted to the poet's genius. Cowper's own humour preserved him from the influence of such blind guides. Moral lecturing, as it was termed, he considered to be his peculiar vocation. Indeed, his superstition on this subject threatened some of his happiest efforts. He did not think that he was called to handle Milton. He trusted that Providence had designed him for something better than a translator of "Homer." Though to "John

Gilpin," even more than to the "Task," he owed his popularity; though the figure of the Cheapside horseman was to be seen in every print-shop; though such men as Sheridan went to hear it read, and such women as Mrs. Siddons clapped their hands in ecstasy at it, yet he cursed himself for having written it.

If Cowper originated the reaction against Pope, or was among the first, more correctly, to co-operate with it, we must go forward to the poetical associations of Scott, to witness it in its highest and most active development. I know no one, indeed, who was more constitutionally adapted to direct a phase in literature, none to whose composition the phase of literature which he directed was more thoroughly congenial. From none of his contemporaries could the notes of the ancient minstrelsy have extracted a more cordial response, or the pictures of legendary lore obtained a more cordial assent. In his composition he possessed pre-eminently some of the materials which go to make up the antiquarian in common with the grandame, an indefatigable taste for and a trysting faith in the superstitions of other days. Horace Walpole affected to display a frivolous penchant for relics. But the mania of the connoisseur of Strawberry Hill was the result of nothing but an idle whim. He was quaint, in fact, and quaintness seemed a part of his nature. He had a taste for architecture, but in this, as, indeed, in all his tastes, there was more curiosity than science, more whim than genius, and more foppery than anything.¹ Scott's passion was more the passion of a man of science. There was in it a Quixotic sincerity, an unworldly honesty, very much akin to that which drove his own Monkbairns from his home at Fairport, to hunt for Roman remains among the neighbouring hills, and very different from that trifling partiality which furnished

¹ See Hardinge Letters, "Nichols' Lit. Anec.," vol. viii. p. 527.

the villa of the author of the "Castle of Otranto" with the musty collections of the auction mart, with pipes, spurs, parchments, and spear-heads. In addition to these personal predilections, there was much in his favour. From the locality in which he was bred, and in which he sang, he acquired all the advantages which are to be extracted from the union of the romance of fiction and the romance of history. The physical features of Scotland, its mountains and lakes, its brownies and pixies, wraiths and cantrips, the character of its people, half shepherds half moss-troopers, the traditions of their homes, half fictitious half historical, presented to his kindred taste features of no ordinary interest. The predilections of Burns were strong, but they were the result rather of association and habit than of education, the predilections of the nursery rather than the studio. Scott's fervent imagination early imbibed of the atmosphere which he breathed. A critic of the day, himself a Scotchman, objected strongly to the redundant reappearance of such chivalrous creations as Marmion, and such aerial creatures as the White Lady of Avenal. It required, indeed, but little effort to conjure up old scenes of antique superstition and antique prowess. The traditions of forest and lake, the bare-kneed Gael that hunted the antlered monarch of the wood amid his pine-clad crags one day, and opposed his Celtic claymore to the steel of the Saxon invader the next, the gloomy chieftain whose castled steep defied all but the spell of the withered weird, the aged minstrel to whose hoary locks the iron-studded gates unbarred, the holy palmer from Salem first and last from Rome, the lordly abbot, bloated with Rhenish and the pride of the keys, the black cowed monk, the modesty of the veiled sisterhood, were all as familiar to him as the legends about Fingall's Hall and Selma's Feast, or the more authentic tales of Knox and the Bruce. What all the associations which

still cling to the Thessalian hills are to the fallen descendants of Homer and Leonidas, what the lakes and dales of the Swiss Rhine still whisper to the countrymen of Tell, such are the impressions which yet linger with hereditary affection round the tangled brakes, the sedgy fens, and heathery moors of the Highland home.

With the labours of Scott the genial mind of Byron associated him, even in defiance of his eccentric love of paradox. Like the Beau in the "Tatler," who, hesitating between the changes of fashion, wore a buckle in one shoe and a string in the other, he aided and abetted the romantic regeneration in his practice and opposed himself to it in theory. Judging him by his works, the school of Pope was the very last school with which we should be disposed to identify him. Yet it is certain his principles were enlisted on its side. He took part with Scott, but he openly rebukes himself for doing so, says he is ashamed of it; and if he does not assert in as many words that the author of the "Essay on Man" is as high a poet as Shakspeare or Milton,¹ he does not hesitate to insinuate that all the paltry renown and trashy jingle of the upstarts that pretend to rival him, all the Claudians of the day, will wither before the fame of that illustrious and unrivalled man. A depreciation of Pope was with him a symptom of the decline of English poetry, and the publication of an edition of Pope's works, the redemption of the public taste from rapid degeneracy. Petrarch in like manner despised the poems of Knighthood, and sighed for the heroic mythology of antiquity; yet he has embodied the very spirit of mediæval heroism in sonnets that still survive the forgotten beauties of his "Africa." There are scarcely any of Byron's pieces, with the exception, perhaps, of his "Cain," which betray any of the contemplative metaphysics of the school of Pope; and even that

¹ See Letters 324, 370, and Strictures on Bowles, *passim*.

would, on second thoughts, hardly admit of a comparison. His selection of subjects was evidently spontaneous and original. He delighted to write about, as he delighted to live among, the warm and glowing landscapes of southern skies. The idle strains of the gondolier, the gay kiosk, the whiff of the amber-topped chibouque, the shout of the Imaum from the gilded minaret, the sound of the grave tambour, the whiz of the swift jereed, the glance of the silver-sheathed ataghan, the tumultuous revelries of the carnival, the solemn frivolities of the Rhamazan, were to him stimulants as inspiring as the tartan, the bonnet, and the wailing pibroch had been to the colder fancy of the northern bard. Whatever were his own prejudices, it will always be to his merit to have been among the foremost who introduced the esoteric imagination of the Saxon to the splendours of that oriental imagery, destined to find a still more genial interpreter in the author of "Lalla Rookh."

If the genius of Byron proved itself a slave to the age, I am not sure that Pope may not plead a corresponding influence as an apology for some of his blemishes.

There is no period in English annals in which the English character appears less idiomatic in the eye of the student, than during that interval which elapses between the death of Milton and the birth of Cowper. All those familiar traits of high-spirited courtesy and chivalrous independence, so replete with the most amiable associations of patriotism, it had entirely divested itself of. The native vein of romance, that moved Surrey and Sidney to high deeds and higher aspirations—that well-tempered love of speculation, which confined within the limits of common sense the subtle intellects of Bacon and Shakspeare—were laid aside for a morbid compound of formality that, to say the least of it, was too pretentious to be really English, and a frivolity too

clumsy to be truly French. In literature, in manners, and in dress, from the highest operations of philosophy to the artifices of the toilette-table and the economy of the kitchen-garden, there was no fashion but what was rendered subservient to this vicious combination. The cordial precision of the Puritan was hardly less characteristic than the new epidemic.

No department of letters felt the contagion more severely than poetry. Poetry, indeed, became such as it might have been expected to become, among a people whose ideas of beauty were confined to the number of their patches or the height of their caprioles, and their ideas of nature to the shears of Bridgman and Kent; who believed, with Johnson, that Fleet Street was the finest prospect in the world; deemed, with Chesterfield, that etiquette is the essence of morality; and were content to accept the dictum of Bolingbroke, that *bienséance* is one of the first endowments of a king. Imagination succumbed to the restraints of *bon ton*. Its flights became subdued, its harmony unimpassioned, its raptures softened to a whisper. It acquired an air of sickly robustness, of civic rusticity, of club-house sentimentality.

One particular circumstance which considerably aided the malign influence of conventionalism, was the strong association of poetry with politics, whether it developed itself in satire or in panegyric. The Muse, it is evident, had nothing to gain by having to sing of the discords of James and Monmouth, and the quarrels of Whigs and Tories. The ears of faction might have been tickled to hear Shaftesbury compared to a Jew, or Marlborough to an eagle or an angel, but on the imagination the analogy could have had only a prosaic effect. Pegasus, as Sheffield sang in his "Art of Poetry," bears but a dead weight, when rid by your lumpish Minister of State. For every ode to Pulteney or Walpole, for every com-

parison between Anna and a Phoenix, William and Mount Etna, for every verse that built a temple to Liberty or raised a monument to Milton, a muse was sacrificed. The association, happy as it was for poets, was most unfortunate for poetry. Men who were paid well to convert the merits and demerits of every intrigue into rhyme, had neither the inclination nor the leisure to turn their eye beyond the precincts of Westminster or the Palace Yard. Accordingly, it would be difficult to find an interval in the poetical literature of any other country, when poetry so entirely forsook its natural functions, and paid less obeisance to nature. It might, with some labour, be possible to find a familiar figure among the scenic sketches of the dramatists. But of descriptive poetry, such as it appeared in the "Comus," or in the "Dewdrop" of Marvell, and such as it was afterwards to appear in Cowper and Thomson, there was literally none.

Even such imagery as made pretensions to an English dress was so disguised in the fopperies of Greece and Rome, as scarcely to deserve the credit of nationality. Indeed at no period had the authors of antiquity exercised a greater influence on our national letters. To say that they supplied all the material for manufacturing our poetry, is to give but a small idea of that influence. Every writer who felt his powers of originating inferior to his powers of imitating, compensated for the superiority of his ear over his imagination, by translating the "Pastorals" of Theocritus, turning the "Æneid," "Thebaid," or "Pharsalia" into English rhythm, and adapting the "Satires" of Horace and Juvenal, or the "Elegies" of Ovid, to an English dress. The inauguration of a king, the birth of a prince, or the marriage of a princess, was sure to be celebrated in Latin hexameters or sapphics, filled with appeals to Jove, the

Parcæ, or Matrona. Nor was the infatuation confined to the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease ; the most popular judges shared in it. The "Leonidas" of Glover was quoted with applause in the gay circle of Leicester House, when that circle contained Mallet and the author of the "Seasons." Lord Lyttleton pronounced the fortunate writer equal to Pope and Milton, and gravely thanked the age for having given him Homer again. Hume joined with the critical reviewers in their hyperbolical praises of Wilkie's "Epigoniad." Spratt's adaptation of the "Plague at Athens," from Thucydides, was far better received than the "Paradise Lost." Even the drama did not escape ; and audiences in possession of "Lear," "Macbeth," and "Hamlet," were found ready to shower their plaudits on any trash that bore the classic title of "Cato," "Phædra and Hippolytus," "Apollo and Daphne." The spirit of Paganism had taken possession of our imagination as completely as it had absorbed our taste in Elizabeth's time, when, according to Hall and Holingshed, every pageant was a pantheon, every pastrycook a mythologist, and every footman a satyr,—when the metamorphosis was regularly reacted in a sweetmeat, and the siege of Troy re-fought in a plum-cake. In the ornamental jargon which it introduced into our verse, the Stour was Stourus, a Cheshire cheese was a Carnavian cheese ; the Po, Padua ; the Danube, Ister ; the Rhone, Rhodanus : and no author who did not wish to see his Epic consigned to the second-hand book-stalls of Moorfields, would have alluded to England but as Britannia, Flanders as Flandria, and Ramillies as Ramillia. Ingenuity found a metaphor for the most familiar objects. A wig is Alecto's snaky tresses, a passenger traversing St. Giles is Theseus traversing the labyrinth of Crete, and a magistrate sitting in judgment is nothing less than Minos or Rhada-

manthus. According to the very letter of Boileau's canon, framed under the pressure of a taste which he was very far from originating, a poem contained all the gods in Spence's "Polymetis."

"Every virtue a divinity is seen;
Prudence is Pallas, Beauty's Paphos' Queen.
'Tis not a cloud from which swift lightnings fly,
But Jupiter that thunders from the sky:
Echo's no more an airy empty sound,
But a fair nymph that weeps her lover drowned."

In the Pastorals, the shepherd's pipe is sure to be the pipe of Pan, and the dewdrops the tears of Aurora. Every lover must be a despairing Damon or a cruel Phillis. The sun must be Phœbus and the moon Cynthia. Every pot-house Anacreontic must echo with invocations of Comus, Jove, and Bacchus. Our poetry, indeed, has never been free from mannerism. In Cowley, it displayed conceits of thought; in Wordsworth, if I may use the expression, conceits of feeling; in Pope, conceits of style predominate.

Nothing better illustrates the general depravity than the use of the sonnet and ode. In the hands of Milton it had breathed lofty laments over the victims of Savoy, or chanted its pæans of triumph with the Sabæan cowherds. If we turn to his successors, to those who were considered his rivals, the Hammonds, Landsdownes, Priors, and Somervilles, we find nothing but diluted compliments from Ovid, devoted to the praise of some townish Chloe or Clælia, as unlike the heroines of Ovid, as a naked prostitute is unlike a naked Indian. Nor did this inverted taste end here. It comprehended the whole circle of the polite arts, and according to the periodicals of the day shed its influence on lawn, avenue, grassplot, and parterre. The Christian theology, it was complained, had been expunged to make room for the heathen mythology. If a pond was

dug, Neptune emerged from the basin and presided in the middle. If a vista was cut through a grove, it must be terminated by a Dryad or an Apollo. Every walk had its complement of Fauns, every library its Penates, and every hall-door its presiding Lares. It was humorously hinted¹ that the very churches had been invaded, that one honest Hampshire baronet had ordered two fine statues of Fame and Fortune to take the place of St. Peter and St. Paul, and that our Lady had made room for Proserpine, and the holy St. Christopher fallen a victim to the Farnesian Hercules.

It was this wretched mannerism that Pope seemed born to extend to its utmost limits. In one respect the association was of use to him. But the ornaments that served him when he was writing of the loves of Paris and Helen, the wrath of Achilles and the wanderings of Ulysses, failed him entirely when he began to sing of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. No City laureate would now be guilty of transplanting the elaborate theogony of Greece and Rome into the Druidical simplicity of Saxon scenery, a fashion which deserved a keener chastisement than the affected ridicule of Gay's "Shepherds' Week." The idea of Sicilian muses and naiads watching over the alders of Thames, or Flora or Pomona protecting the orchards of Hampton, presents a hardly less incongruous image to modern taste, than the Earl of Peterborough with his star and garter on guarding a basket of cabbages in the Bath market. Pope, indeed, had no appreciation of true pastoral poetry. Descriptive poetry was in his opinion as absurd as a feast made up of sauces. Accordingly he treated it as a mere condiment, a subordinate relish adapted to give a flavour to a passing sentiment, but wholly unworthy of affording the main

¹ In a paper in the "Connoisseur," 113.

entertainment. His "Garden" after Cowley was written solely on this principle. The laurel and narcissus are introduced solely as auxiliaries to the story of Daphne and the Ovidian boy.

It is not intended to deny the author of the "House of Fame" a just appreciation of Nature; but his taste was evidently set in a subjective mould. His very earliest pieces, written at an age when the imagination might naturally be considered the warmest, betray all the colder faculties of the metaphysician and the critic. Warton was in the wrong in saying that his epic would never have been successful, since his constant reasoning had crushed his imagination. His imagination, as he grew older, grew warmer. Any one who will compare his "Essay on Criticism" with his "Essay on Man" will see that in copiousness of illustration and in sweetness of expression, the philosophic poem is the superior of the two. Had he fulfilled his design of writing an epic according to his programme, it would, I suspect, have contained many judicious analogies, many highly enamelled portraits, and many beautiful episodes in the picturesque. But his associations would have disqualified him for representing the simple habits of primitive heroism. Brutus would have been too much like Earl Peterborough, and the Egyptian sages would have discoursed on civil regimen, modes of worship, and modes of government, too much in the style of Lord Bolingbroke.

It would be foreign to my purpose to make any detailed examination of Pope's poetical claims. As a poet, his fame has been subjected to the severest test of controversy, before his position in poetry has been assigned him. That position, ranking him just beneath Dryden in some things, and just above him in others, is no longer likely to be gainsaid by any but a disciple affected with a Byronic enthusiasm. They who would take the highest

estimate of his natural powers, must forget his "Homer," and turn from those of his poems whose subjects require the pencil of the painter, to those which pretend to take cognizance of men, manners, and sentiments—from his "Windsor Forest," for instance, to his "Moral Essays."

Great stress has been laid on his "Epistle of Heloise to Abelard," as an exemplification of his command of the tender passions. In reality, I am disposed to think that his disposition was far too warped, his temper too much under constitutional influence, and his habits too much associated with the morality of the Restoration, to leave him anything but a very deficient realization of feminine excellence. Nothing is more marked than his systematic depreciation of the womanly virtues in his writings. A "youth of passion and an age of spleen" are all the characteristics he allows them, and they are, accordingly, the only characteristics with which he has drawn them. His females are for the most part rakes or beldams, flirts or prudes, Chloes or Atossas. It is characteristic of the "Epistle of Heloise" that its reputation decays with its age. There is scarcely a reader that does not rise from its perusal with the conviction that, moving as are the sentiments, deep as is the despair of the heroine, the whole piece is, nevertheless, an esoteric, written for an age, and only adapted for the age in which it was written. The chord of human suffering is touched, indeed, but it is not swept by that master-hand that gave us the plaints of Ophelia. It is what it professes to be—an Elegy, discoursing alternate notes of rapture and remorse, but the remorse is half stifled with the clouds of fragrance that swim around it, and the rapture is too plainly actuated by a spirit that might have warmed the eloquence of any of those fashionable demireps, whose names were daily invoked in pretty Ovidian couplets on the toasting-glasses of every coffee-house. No beauty

that it contains could compensate for the allusion to the effects of Abelard's mutilation, in that fatal line,—

“No pulse that riots, and no blood that glows.”

Warton, when he praised the poet for the delicacy with which the whole catastrophe was referred to, really acknowledged, what nobody will be disposed to deny, that the reference had better been away. Even in a ludicrous poem, such insinuations must always be offensive. When Hobbelia talks of putting golden flies into the mug of Lubberkin, in Gay's “Pastorals,” though she had the plea of rusticity on her side, yet there is hardly a reader of taste or discrimination who is not of opinion, that Gay might with more propriety have left the figure to its natural atmosphere, to the Hans Carvel or the Paulo Purganti.

If the “Rape of the Lock” had not been exempted by its title of mock heroic, a somewhat similar charge of sophistication might be brought against it. Good as it is, it would have been still more appreciated did it not unfortunately suggest a comparison. Those who have seen Prospero ruling the tempest, or Puck girdling the earth in a moment, or Ariel shielding virtue from enchantment, are not likely to look with favour on the author, who has narrowed the domain of fairydom to the superficies of a fine lady's boudoir. The transformation to Zephyretta guiding the nice conduct of a fan, or Brillante superintending the arrangement of an ear-pendant, or Crispissa tending a hair-braid, or Ariel dispensing the comfort of a lap-dog, suggests at the moment the idea that the poem was intended to be a caricature, intended to perform the duties of the “Rehearsal” or the “Splendid Shilling.” Addison, who knew the propensities of Pope, and loved the classic creations of the “Midsummer Night's Dream” and the “Masque of Comus” too much to see them parodied, probably foresaw the result when he advised

Pope to let the poem stand as it stood at first, without the fairy machinery. That he gave him this advice, as the cankered mind of Pope suggested, because he foresaw that he should not succeed, is as incredible as that Dryden should have recommended Creech to translate "Horace" because he foresaw that he should fail.

The basis on which Pope's fame chiefly rests, is undoubtedly his complete mastery over his native language. No man, not even Thucydides or Tacitus, practised the art of condensation and compression more successfully, and no poet, certainly no English poet, ever imparted such epigrammatic brevity, combined with such smoothness of versification, a brevity—

"That turned the common dust
Of servile opportunity to gold,"

and a smoothness that assisted the metre without impairing its temper,—very different to the insipid harmony of those posthumous imitators who, season after season, turned out by the thousand, as honest Ben Jonson sings,—

"Verses as smooth and soft as cream,
In which there is neither depth nor stream."

It is this consummate polish that has given to his satires that air of excessive coldness which the critics object to them. The slow artifices of elaboration but tamely express the ever gleaming vehemence of moral indignation. If it is true that out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh, fervour of feeling and spontaneity of diction have too close a connection in rhetoric and nature to suffer a divorce. In Pope we see too much of the poet to believe in the satirist, too much of the composer to believe that the notes are but the unwrought expressions of involuntary emotions. We recognize, indeed, the curl of the lip and the kindling of the eye, but it is all in the triumph of self. It was his error in supposing that

fictitious zeal could be disguised by style ; that, as Bottom considered that Fluke by his roar could frighten his audience into the conviction that he was a lion, he might by the energy of his vituperation forge a claim to a censorship.

In his personal satires, on the other hand, all is *cum grano*. No ingenious metaphor or laboured antithesis is required to counteract the malice and the spite he does not feel. There is no mumbling of the game he cares not to bite. When he has to deal with the farcical foibles of character, the polish that enfeebled the severity of his moral muse only renders the arrows of his ridicule more poignant. Like those satyrs of Ethiopia, that Herodotus tells us of, his dexterity consists in devouring ants and all creeping things. The individual frailties of the Theobalds and Dennises, Curls and Lintots, had far more effort in inspiring his scorn and stirring his bile, than the generic depravity of a society whose degradations he shared in, with much too philosophic an apathy cordially to loathe.

There was but one man, a contemporary of Pope, to whom nature had given an authentic title to act the part of the "cynic." That man was Swift. In his constitution, the temper, the tongue, and the heart of the misanthrope met in harmonious co-operation. Scorning his fellow-men with a hatred more withering than that of Mephistopheles, treating the claims of social propriety with a callousness more contemptuous than that of Timon, he wanted neither the inclination to abuse, nor the courage to express his abuse. Not ignorant of or insensible to the claims of virtue, intimately familiar with the phases of every vice, he only required the native force of his caustic eloquence to have been turned from the absorbing interests of politics to nobler aims, to have earned for himself a reputation loftier than that of

Juvenal. Even the malice of Pope fades away before the blazing rhetoric of his misanthropy. Pope's satires, by the side of those of the author of the "Legion Club"—to use the expression for which Jacob Hall was so soundly rated by Milton, and which the old poet for the first time in our language characterized as a Bull—are comparatively toothless. The dexterity which Pope expended in the accumulation of ingenious ornament, was with him concentrated to render the blow more unavoidable. Homeliness and brevity were rare advantages to a pen so enamoured of invective, and so habituated to the expression of an almost heartless ferocity.

Foreign writers have accused us of sinking the personal in the literary character. "In England," wrote D'Alembert, in his essay on "Men of Letters," "people were content with Newton's being the greatest intellect of the age. In France, one would have wished him to be also amiable."

There is hardly a biography of any native celebrity, whose pages would not supply a contradiction to this illiberal slander. Nowhere is criticism more alert to detect the vices of genius, or more disposed to distinguish between the man and his book. We admire, for instance, the "Paradise Lost" in humble amazement, but we do not forget that its author was the opponent of Salmasius and the husband of Mary Powel. We watch with reverence that mighty genius which bequeathed to us the "Instauratio Magna" tracing an echo or stuffing a capon, but we are never for a moment insensible to the dripping head of Essex and the cracking sinews of Peacham.¹ Sir Roger de Coverley is seldom from our elbow, but even his hearty presence cannot keep out of our sight the fatal wine-bottle and the

¹ The cause for Bacon, however, is about to be reheard, and with every probability of a modification of judgment.

suspicious Homer. The most hasty contemplation of such a character as Swift's, would alone be sufficient to quell any rising prejudice or impartiality. For Swift, it must be observed, was not without his recommendation. Every page of his writings, it is true, is lighted up with a demoniacal glare. His pen is always steeped in the gall of bitterness. His sentiments are always pervaded as it were with a spirit of Phalarism, are always expressive of enjoyment in the torments of his victims. The corruption of his fellow-men is the meat and drink of his appetite. He seems to feed on the unsound parts—on the offal of their character—with the same gusto that a ghou! is said to feed on the remains of the charnel-house, that a gourmand feeds on the disease that composes his *pâté de foi gras*. Yet, in spite of these repulsive features, though Southey had not a greater aversion for a pork-butcher than I have for a moral anthropophagus, there is a fascination connected with his mental reputation that affects me, I confess, in some such mysterious manner as the leprosy of his mistress affected the poet's Glendoveer. Yet, in spite of these fascinations, one does not forget in the author of "Lilliput" the Dean of St. Patrick's, the follower of Somers, and the lover of Stella.

To return. The poetry of Swift bears singularly the stamp of his character. To form an even tolerably correct notion of that character, it must be considered in reference to his destiny. He had, in fact, joined one of the unhappiest of fates to one of the unhappiest of tempers. He had come into the world unpropitiously. In after years the only commemoration he would give his birthday, was the perusal of that fine outburst of wretchedness, in which Job laments that a man child was born to his father. Between his birth and his entrance into college, he underwent vagaries that would

have tried the nerves of a gipsy.- After he had entered college new troubles awaited him. His temper was haughty ; his imagination active. He soon, therefore, kicked against the restraints of a routine which pressed hardest on both temper and imagination. Burgeldicius and Keckermannus were soon given up for coffee-houses and taverns. Instead of syllogisms and theses, he took to writing squibs on his tutors. All that remained, therefore, of his college life was a series of admonitions, submissions, and suspensions. He quitted it accordingly for his mother's residence in Leicestershire, only to find it necessary to quit his mother's residence for the patronage of Sir William Temple. His biography from this date is nothing but a series of designs petulantly formed, and disappointments angrily borne. At Moorpark he had been noticed by William. But William had died, and Swift, scarcely better than a dependant of Temple, had gained nothing but the knowledge to cut asparagus in the Dutch manner. He had been ordained, but ordination had brought him no prize. He had hastily thrown off the priest for the pamphleteer with as little success. Theologically a Tory, he had fought in the ranks of the Whigs, but the Whigs had looked coldly on him, and the Tories, with whom he afterwards coalesced, had rewarded him with an ecclesiastical banishment to a country, which was to treat him with a hatred and an affection such as was new towards a man of letters, and such as in the next century Scotland exhibited towards Sir Walter Scott only. The " Draper's Letters " made even a greater impression than the letters of Malachi Malagrowther. In domestic matters he had been equally unhappy. He had not been married till his fame was well nigh consummated ; but both in his married and in his single state, he had contrived to retain over women an influence

which beaux like Selwyn and wits like Chesterfield never acquired, and which still remains an inexplicable feature in that strange disposition. Even now, erudite writers and ladies of a certain stamp rank the eccentric loves of Cadenus and Vanessa with those of Petrarch and Laura, Abelard and Heloïse.

I have my own theory with regard to his amours, but in the present state of documentary evidence I do not feel justified in urging it. One thing which, in the interval, may help to a comparatively fair estimate of his conduct, is a trait which entered largely into his public as well as private demeanour, his apparent love of inconsistency for inconsistency's sake. He called himself, for example, a Tory in matters of Church, while he wrote the "Tale of a Tub" as a caricature on the Church. He then called himself a Tory in politics, and left a letter full of the strongest denunciations on standing armies, and other main tenets of Tory doctrine. He carried himself proudly, and even superciliously, towards the Ministry, though he wore out his nights and days in working for them like a slave. He domineered over his curates and domestics, yet no employer was really kinder. He took high ground on subjects of doctrinal religion, yet those who witnessed his singularities half accused him of making religion a jest. His rudeness and even harshness towards the sex was proverbial; yet one of the sex who knew him well, declared that she was better content to be drawn a Daphne by him than a Saccharissa by Waller. This discrepancy extended itself to his works. In his poems the subjects are as nauseous as could be found out of Rochester or Prior; yet, nauseous though they be, it is impossible to deny rare felicity to the treatment. The contrast between Addison and Swift is singularly brought out, I think, by the contrast of their literary manners. Addison discouraged vice; but

he discouraged it not by exposing it in all its filthy attire, but negatively, by insisting on the enjoyments and rarer seductions of virtue. Swift took vice in its most legible shape, and held it up to public disgust. Swift taught by repulsion ; Addison by attraction.

A strange unhappy destiny seems to mark out Swift's whole career, moral, literary, and political, for special observation from even the most transient critic. He was a priest and a dean in the eyes of his own generation ; he is very little better than a vicious Lothario in ours. His poetry and his prose gave him an easy superiority among the critics of his day. Even a foreigner, and that foreigner a Schlosser, can now discover that beyond the mere husk of style, they contain no principle of permanence in them. Politically, he caught the shadow, but the substance was denied him. He was flattered and unrewarded. I know that I am treading on dubious ground. I know that it is still a question whether Swift was imposed on by the flatteries, which Queen Anne's Ministry dealt out to him in a thousand delicate and insidious ways.

It is indeed surprising how many sensible people still believe, and will apparently believe to the end of their days, that Harley and St. John placed more confidence in Swift than they did in each other. Not a word that the sanguine egotism of the ambitious parson wrote to a woman too weak or too fond to disbelieve him, that these partisans do not cordially endorse. To them, as to himself, he is the pillar of the State, the straw to support a drowning Cabinet. The truth is, as Lord Orrery asserted, the Cabinet employed him, but they did not trust him. They cajoled him with the mockery of trust, called him "Jonathan," complained that they could keep nothing from him, admitted him into their bed-chambers while stars and garters waited at the

levée door, regulated their dinner hours to please him, took him to Windsor in their coach, whispered significantly into his ear to tease the Whigs, gave him their pictures enamelled in zinc and a dozen other little mementos, treated his Irish friends with reluctant civility, laughed at his complaints, and, it may be, listened gravely to his advice. But these, though they may be the marks of friendship—friendship which the intellect of Swift merited as well as earned—are no indications of political confidence. Their intercourse was undoubtedly familiar enough. His relation to them, as the pamphleteer of their party, demanded it; he must have known their plans of opposition and their measures of defence before he could write about them. Beyond this, however, he did not know; and this he knew in common with his fellow-scribes. But that he was trusted as Prior, for instance, was trusted, and as his friends would pretend he was trusted, we have, besides his own public confession, made in sober earnest, that

“ All that passes *inter nos*,
Might be proclaimed at Charing Cross,”

the most convincing proofs. I will give a few of them, and I hope there will be an end of extravagances in his favour. Conjecture was rife as to the appointment of the Privy Seal for the coming conference at Utrecht. The matter was not a very important one, and Swift, if anybody, might have been supposed to be in the secret. But Swift writes, “ My Lord Treasurer began a health to my Lord Privy Seal. Prior punned, and said it was so privy he knew not who it was. But I fancy they have fixed it all, and we shall know to-morrow. When I went out this morning, I was surprised with the news that the Bishop of Bristol was Lord Privy Seal.”¹ Again—the reference is to Prior’s clandestine visit to Versailles, to

¹ Diary.

open negotiations for peace : “ Prior has been absent out of town these three months, nobody knows where, and is lately returned. People confidently affirm that he has been in France, and I half believe it. The Secretary pretends he knows nothing about it.”¹ At a later date : “ They say it is certain Prior has been in France. Nobody doubts it. *I had not time to ask the Secretary, he was in such haste.*”² “ Here is the Duke of Marlborough going out of England. Lord knows why ! which causes many speculations.”³ “ Lord Bolingbroke told me I must walk away when dinner was done, because Lord Treasurer and he and another were to enter upon business. I said it was fit that I should know their business as anybody, for I was to justify.” He stayed, indeed, but we have his own words that “ it was so important that he was like to sleep on it.” Once more. The proofs of the whole Tory Ministry, and the Queen at the head of them, being engaged in intrigues with St. Germain are so strong that no one now doubts them for an instant ; yet so completely was Swift in the dark, that he asserts,⁴ “ The Queen, to my knowledge, hated and despised the Pretender.” And in another place,⁵ “ Ministers would never have held the mask on before me, and if such affairs were in agitation, I must have had very bad luck not to have discovered some grounds for suspicion.” That he was imposed on, or, what is the more rational view of the matter, that he imposed on himself and his friends, there cannot, after such testimony, be a shadow of doubt.

In addition to this, there is the evidence suggested by the characters of the individual Ministers with whom Swift had to deal. Men with such little natural affinity for

¹ Diary.² Ibid.³ Ibid.⁴ “ Note to Burnet,” vi. 68.⁵ “ Enquiry into the behaviour of the Queen’s last Ministry.”

each other would hardly have combined to trust Swift ; for it must be remembered, so far from there being any cordiality, the quarrels of the Cabinet had become the talk of every coffee-house. Common friends saw the issue, shrugged their shoulders, but refused to inter-meddle. Swift, indeed, was an exception. His interest depended on their reconciliation, and he was indefatigable in his efforts to reconcile. He was continually manœuvring to bring the Secretary and Treasurer together in Mrs. Masham's drawing-room, but of no avail. Once he contrived for them to travel five hours in the same coach to Windsor ; but Harley only remained reserved, Bolingbroke suspicious. Several times he harangued them seriously, told them their mischiefs might be ended in two minutes, or would end the Ministry in two months, and that he would retire. His success was never varied ; the Secretary generally nodded, the Treasurer asked him to dinner next day.

There never were colleagues less morally and intellectually adapted to command the confidence of each other, or to suggest a mutual deposit of confidence in their friends. To the title of statesman, Harley had very little claims, in the scientific sense of the word. His ideas of statesmanship may be gathered from what he used to tell Swift, that "wisdom in public affairs is not what is commonly believed, the forming of schemes with remote views, but the making use of such incidents as happen."¹ This is diplomacy ; but it is not statesmanship.

But he did not even fulfil the ordinary duties of the head of a Cabinet. The complaints against him on this score were numerous on all sides. He was tainted with that "evil affection inherent in power," stigmatized so long ago by Æschylus, the *τοῖς φιλοῦσι μή πεποιθέναι*. He

¹ Swift, "Letter to Arch. King," July 12, 1711.

affected to this end the most mysterious air of secrecy. It pervaded all he did or said, every feature in his countenance, every muscle in his body. I have always thought that the character of Dubius in Cowper's "Conversation" is an admirable portrait of Harley :

" He would not with a peremptory tone
Assert the nose upon his face his own ;
With hesitation admirably slow,
He humbly hopes, presumes it may be so.
Through constant dread of giving truth offence,
He ties up all his hearers in suspense ;
Knows what he knows as if he knew it not,
What he remembers seems to have forgot.
His sole opinion, whatsoe'er befall,
Centring at last in having none at all.
His ambiguities his total sum.
He might as well be blind, and deaf and dumb."

It was rarely an ambassador at a levee could get more than a monosyllable from him, and that monosyllable uttered above a whisper.¹ Harcourt declared that he never knew any more of the measures of the Court than his footman, and that Lord Oxford scarcely knew him.² He screens so, writes another correspondent, that not even any of the first nobility can get an audience without difficulty.³ He seldom gave a direct answer ; and it was the current report that he only gave a direct answer when he did not mean to adhere to it. He rarely could be induced to appoint the hour for an interview ; and if he appointed an hour, he rarely kept it. Such talents, it is plain, might have regulated an attorney's office, but were ill adapted to carry on a government. Harley refused to see that a Prime Minister must not always wear the cloak of the conspirator, that it is sometimes even his interest to be a little more candid and a little less circumlocutive than a pettifogger. He forgot that punctuality and decision are as much the duty of a

¹ Macph. "Papers," vol. ii. p. 518.

² Ibid. vol. ii. p. 532.

³ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 296.

statesman as of a tradesman ; that the science of government is a science requiring as strict an observance of time, place, and method, as the science of barter ; that it is sometimes a dangerous over-refinement to act in common business out of the common road ; that a contempt for forms and ceremonies, for little helps and little hindrances, may do very well for a philosopher like Hobbes to write about as the essence of magnanimity, but that in the case of so complicated a piece of machinery as a Cabinet it is apt to lead to chaos ; that, to use Swift's expression, a small infusion of the alderman is absolutely necessary to those engaged in the administration of public affairs. A great deal of this awkward reserve in the distribution of power, this tricky polypragmacy, as the lampoons of the day called it, was doubtless assumed, and assumed probably to hide a want of power. It was one of his maxims that, for a minister to preserve the reputation of power, he must preserve the appearance of it. And this motive explains at once that affected indifference to censure, and that tardiness of self-vindication, which Swift put down to good-nature and benevolence. His moderation was in fact cowardice ; his philosophy covetousness. The Queen was a most difficult person to move. Harley could not endure the suspicion that he was not able to move her. He could endure any amount of abuse from his colleagues for not doing what they wished, rather than own that he had too little influence with his mistress and theirs to do it. "It was whipping day," he used to say, and they might rail as they please. He always took the blame on himself, in order to assume the power to himself. He rather affected his fault to be real, than allow his power to be fictitious.

On Bolingbroke's individual character, I shall dwell at some length. It is, indeed, one of those brilliant, attractive characters that sometimes flash across the

student's path, and invite an almost rapt contemplation. Irrespectively of his connection with Swift, I shall therefore make no apology for bringing to bear upon it labours consummated elsewhere.

History, especially the history of our own country, abounds in a certain class of characters whose names, though still inserted in capitals on its pages, are scarcely ever mentioned above a whisper ; whose titles to immortality are rather assumed than allowed ; and the state of whose reputation, so far from enjoying a flourishing vitality, resembles more the condition of Dante as he describes himself in a single line of the " *Inferno* " before the awful presence of Dis :—

" I died not, yet no life was in me left."

Foremost among this class I would assign Bolingbroke a place. Even while living he enjoyed, I believe, but a very equivocal repute. To those who were capable of judging he seems to have appeared—to borrow a very significant expression from the " *Merchant of Venice* "—every man in no man, a statesman without statesmanship, a philosopher without philosophy, an enthusiast without enthusiasm. Now that he is dead, and his speculations are buried with him, there is little really worth the tribute of a monument from posterity. It is only on those enlarged principles of public justice that led the ancients to pay funeral honours alike to those who failed and those who won in their battles, that posterity can condescend to notice him. The preservation of his memory, in fact, like the preservation of those bodies which the skill of the embalmer and mason has bequeathed to the latest ages, is due to the share of neglect he has met with. Such neglect becomes an absolute kindness, and

" Rudeness to him were fairest courtesy."

But, though looked upon with suspicion as something of

an empiricist among the more thoughtful of his generation, by those who came within the circle of his influence there is no doubt he was hailed as the regenerator of the age, deserving more success than it awarded him. The secret of that influence is, I suspect, he possessed in a rare degree the art of imposing on mankind. Nature had given to his demeanour something of that easy dignity of carriage which artifice had given to his pen; and a well-tempered arrogance stimulated him to use his natural powers to fascinate his contemporaries, just as an itch for notoriety prompted him to use his acquired powers to win the ear of posterity. His life was one continued study. In his youth, though really enamoured of learning, he affected to copy the Bacchanals he read of in the "New Atalantis" of Mrs. Manley. In his manhood, though burning with the lust of political sway, he affected the model of those philosophers who had won the heart and the devotion of Plutarch. When he could not succeed in the latter as well as he had done in the former—when, on retiring into some philosophic hermitage, his friends, instead of sending him philosophic stanzas for his Porch, sent him couplets full of dirt and irony¹—he changed his tone, yielded to their remonstrances, and effected a compromise by assuming the part of Alcibiades, or, what he loved best, according to Swift, the character of Petronius. Such a disguise, it must be owned, suited him best. His friends were amazed at the versatility of the man who seemed—

"Now all for pleasure, now for Church and State."

Nor, if he was sometimes a rake among statesmen, could any of his associates complain that he was the statesman among rakes. In town he was always the man of *ton*, the best-dressed saunterer in the Mall, the readiest hand for a game at the club, or a bottle at the chop-house.

¹ One of these will be found in Swift's "Journal to Stella."

No stranger could recognize the Secretary in the gay-hearted libertine who quoted snatches from Tibullus over pyramids of ortolans and brimmers of Tokay. In the country he smoked tobacco with his neighbours, inquired after the wheat in such a field, paid visits to the kennel, and soon knew all the names of the hounds. The general complaint was that he carried his contempt of the farce of State too far, that he mixed the fine gentleman too much with the man of business, and was in the habit of feigning that the load of affairs was too great for him. His despatches certainly show that he never overlooked the moment when he could forget the Minister in the friend, and that he was quite as ready to discuss the convoy of a batch of Dutch bay-trees, or a cask of Barbadoes waters, as the *brouillon* of a treaty.

But, though the author of the "Patriot King" may have been a fool among judges, he was undoubtedly a judge among fools. That he succeeded in imposing on Swift and Pope, is illustrated by their own extravagant testimony. To have retained the mask under such penetrating eyes assuredly betokened no common actor. On Pope's complete victimization, perhaps, less stress is to be laid. No man was more a dupe to the specious appearance of virtue in others, as one of his earliest biographers acknowledged. He knew, too, very little of Bolingbroke's real sentiments.¹ The philosopher did not admit him beyond the vestibule of his temple. His position with regard to Bolingbroke was that of Eudæmon in the porch of Hypatia's lecture-room. He knew the world only as he saw it from his grotto at Twickenham. Added to this, Pope was a poet, and poets are the last tests of a skilful imposture. Their imaginations, always ready to be struck by the imposing, are always easiest to be imposed upon. Their eye rests upon nothing but pro-

¹ See Bishop Warburton's Works, vol. vii.: 4to.

minences, and their passions, like the love and hate of satirists, are roused only by the extravagantly good or the extravagantly evil. They seldom look between the two extremes, and they seldom, therefore, allow their prejudices to be subdued by a compromise. The brilliant features of Bolingbroke's character caught his fancy, and he paid him the adoration of an immortal. The loathsome features of Dennis passed before his pen, and he depicted him as a demon. But with Swift the case was otherwise. He moved in the world early, was familiar with all its jugglery, and could estimate its false glare and glitter as well as any man. Yet any one who knows anything of his history, knows the superstitious admiration with which he regarded Bolingbroke. A partial explanation may be found in Swift's own vanity and selfishness, two impulses which throughout all his life ludicrously distorted his moral powers of vision. The same feeling that led him to magnify his own credit with the ministry, led him to magnify their individual importance. As he believed that Bolingbroke could not retain his place without his aid, he was naturally induced to believe that Bolingbroke was "the greatest young man he ever saw"—far too great, in fact, to be mentioned in the same page with "the spluttering Sir William Temple."

By position as well as by intellect, Bolingbroke, it must be remembered, too, was by far the most prominent man of his day. The force of his position reacted on the influence of his intellect. No one of his contemporaries moving in his sphere could come near him. Harley, though he affected a great taste for literature, had really very little literature about him. It was "a hollow brain behind a serious mask." Beyond a happy quotation or two from his "Virgil," all his literary activity was but an ingenious idleness. He sometimes, when half fuddled

with Burgundy at the club, hiccuped out couplets made in his more sober moments. Bad as they were, they are, we are inclined to think, the best thing he did. The specimen usually quoted, indeed, is not in his favour :—

“ To serve with love,
And shed your blood,
Approved is above.
But here below
The examples show
’Tis fatal to be good.”

It is but fair to say, that this absurd imitation of Dryden was scribbled at the end of a note to Swift, the night before he was dismissed. If we are to believe Arbuthnot, he sometimes perpetrated a “really most excellent copy of verses.” “I really believe when he lays down he will prove a very good poet. I remember the last part of his verses complaining of ill-usage; at the close he concludes :¹—

“ ‘ He that cares not to rule, will be sure to obey,
When summoned by Arbuthnot, Pope, Parnell, and Gay.”

Bolingbroke, indeed, was nothing of a poet, but even as a poet he far surpassed Harley. The strongest praise that can be given to his poetry will be, to most readers, its strongest condemnation. Such as it is, it is quite worthy of the age of Anne and the companion of Prior, inferior to none in its supply of Delian gods, chaste Castalias, and laughing Cupids. But his poetry was his last claim to the veneration of his admirers. No man in his career had yet found time to criticize Aristotle and refute Plato. No man in his rank could venture, from personal acquaintance, to call Seneca a stoical fop, Jerome a surly, foul-mouthed bully, and Austin an idiot. If his body, too, was all vice, his mind seemed all virtue.

¹ Arbuthnot to Swift, June 12, 1714. Arbuthnot's position was too dependent on his criticism for his criticism to be independent on his position. The reader of Macaulay, however, should not forget Arbuthnot's testimony.

He had propounded a new code of moral philosophy ; he had crayoned out a new model of government.

It is due to their reputation to say, that there were Thomases among his disciples who doubted his speculations on these latter subjects. Pope, though he anticipated the learned figure his patron would make on the same shelf with Locke and Malebranche, yet was half inspired to prophesy that "if Lord Bolingbroke ever trifles, it will be when he writes on divinity." The truth is, he sate down to his philosophy without any of the feelings of a philosopher. He carried with him into his study all the resentments of the cabinet. All his pieces betray the spirit of the polemic. He abused the divines just as he had abused the Whigs. He sees a conspiracy between divines and atheists, just as he saw a conspiracy between Whigs and Jacobites. His temper, too, was none of the best. It had been rendered dogmatic by power long uninterrupted, and then soured by ill success long resented. He came, too, late to the study of his subject, without any previous preparation, and as one of his opponents reminded him in the language of Tully, *Ὁψιμαθεῖς homines scis quam insolentes sint*. He called Paul a leather-stocking pontiff, and Plato a delirious knave, just as in the "Craftsman" he calls Walpole a great macaw and a Norfolk gamester.

That the peculiar department of philosophy, therefore, which Bolingbroke chose, was the last department which, by the natural formation of his character, he was authorized to choose, no one will doubt. At the same time, no one will say, as Warburton said, that there is nothing to be met with in his works but the rankness of South without his force, and the malignity of Marvell without his wit. Warburton's own fate, unhappily, is that of his opponent. Very few take to the "First Philosophy ;" but fewer still leave the "First Philosophy" for the

“ Divine Legation.” There are, impartially speaking, not many books in which there is such little relative proportion between the thought and the diction—in which the cost bestowed on the workmanship so enormously out-values the intrinsic cost of the materials. If the philosophy is worthless, we cannot fairly say the same of the language in which it is embalmed. We approach his ethical works, indeed, with the same feeling and with the same curiosity that we approach the buried remains of some Coptic mummy. With reverent fingers we unwreath the precious folds that support the crumbling mass within. We cherish the smallest shred of the picture-written texture, amazed at the elaborate value of the shrine ; but for the carcass itself, we turn from it with loathing, eager to denounce the extravagance that wasted on it the costly spices which alone have kept it from dissolution.

Sterne or Churchill playing the preacher, is hardly more incongruous than Bolingbroke seated

“ Among the budge doctors of the Stoic fur ; ”

and no biographer would leave their discourses for the “ Rosciad ” or “ Tristram Shandy ” more readily than one quits his philosophical speculations for his political reflections. While he remains in the mephitic atmosphere of metaphysics, he is a mere *dilettante*, just as Horace Walpole was a *dilettante* in literature, and Chesterfield a *dilettante* in æsthetics. The moment he quits theory for fact, and leaves deduction for narration, the giddy fool, to use one of his own expressions, is converted into the formal pedant. Nothing can betray less of the author of the “ Patriot King ”—a work in which speculation still predominates—than the author of the “ State of Parties.” A casual reader, judging from the tenor of the writer’s life, might expect to find much ingenious argument in behalf of Tories, and much ingenious abuse of Whigs. One moment’s consideration spent on his

character will at once dispel such a suspicion. And while it affords enlightenment, it will at the same time suggest the explanation how it was that a man who lived like an epicurean, in the loosest acceptation of the term, yet wrote like a Stoic, in the strictest sense of stoicism, should have promoted civil and religious disabilities bills, yet on subjects of civil and religious liberty should, in his writings, have outstripped every Whig from Buchanan to Dr. Price.

To follow Bolingbroke into exile, and through all the deviations of his career, is not my intention, though such an exposure would display yet more emphatically the ignorance of those who persist in associating a man like Swift in his political confidence. How he at last entered into the service of the Prince for whom he had so long plotted, and was made Secretary of State—how it fell to his lot to be suspected by his new friends, as he had been suspected by his old ones—how he was ignominiously rejected by them in spite of real services—how that rejection led to a still more ignominious revenge,—is told in every history, and in none more perspicuously, I will not say more ingenuously, than in the history of his own confessions.

When he once more returned to England, he found himself in another atmosphere than when he had left it. The tumultuous waters of sedition had almost subsided to their natural level in the constitution. Party feeling had divested itself of a spirit of open rebellion. There was scarcely any demand for its display, and no apology for its excesses either in Church or State. The portrait of Sacheverel, which had once enhanced the popularity of tobacco-pipes among the pinnacle-flyers of a few years back, was now considered by Hogarth worthless enough to share the company of Captain Macheath in the “Harlot’s Progress.” The turbulent spirit of Atterbury,

the last of a turbulent race, passed into exile as he returned from it. The South Sea bubble, with all its kindred bubbles, had burst, and nothing more formidable was left to rouse the rivalry of caricaturists or medallists than a Parliamentary duel or a Coventry riot. The best thing, therefore, for a man who had so misspent the opportunities of public life, was to retire from it. But such was not the object of that restless spirit. He made a feint, indeed, of retiring—bought a farm, built ricks, painted the dwelling-house with agricultural emblems in chalk, set up over the doors agricultural mottoes in Latin, and applied to himself moral reflections from Seneca.¹ But all this parade was a mere counterfeit. There was no sincerity in it, except, perhaps, the sincerity which arises from a man's ignorance of his own inclinations.

The truth is, there are some few aspiring to the title of moralists who cut a most inconsistent figure between their preaching and their practice ; and among these few Bolingbroke holds a prominent position. The unsuspecting student who allows himself to glide along the smooth current of his biographical effusions, who yields to the seductions of that noble style, breathing as it does a dignified attachment to truth, and full of a dignified forbearance of error, will be loath to believe, in his desire to do credit, if not to the finest writing, at least to the finest reading in the English language, that the author who is thus eloquent in excuses for hating his enemies and loving his friends, was notorious for the pliancy with which he betrayed his friends to his enemies, and resold his enemies to his friends ; and if unsurpassed in the art of apologizing for treachery, unsurpassed in the art of being treacherous with impunity.

Not to quit the main topic of the chapter abruptly, it may be objected with regard to Pope the man, that I

¹ Bolingbroke's Works, vol. ii. p. 78.

have taken a partial and a not very flattering view of his character. It is true that I have extenuated naught, but I have set down naught in malice. It would be easy, as some have done, to paint an heroic hunchback, not inferior to his age in general depravity, and superior to it in mental ability. But a mischievous rule to introduce into criticism is that which justifies a man by his generation; which would excuse his gluttony because they were gluttonous; his indecency, because they were not prigs; his irreligion, because they were sceptics. Pope's character is not difficult of analysis; and his plain, dry, unadorned disposition is the last to call for notes of admiration and notes of enthusiasm. The good in him must really be judged by, not contrasted with, the evil. His virtues, in fact, were the residue of his vices. He was comparatively sociable, but his sociability was the result of a very irritable temper, that bore him reactively into close relationship with a few, as it drove him farther from his general friends. He affected religion; but if we are to believe conversational records, and his own writings, his sense of religion was the very dregs and leavings of an active scepticism. He exhibited but little viciousness in principle, but it was because conventional morality allowed him a very free indulgence in practice.

Owing to, or, at least, in conjunction with, the retrospective tendencies of the age, Paneulogism is become one of the most prominent vices of criticism.

CHAPTER VI.

GOLDSMITH, AND THE HISTORY OF PROSE FICTION
IN ENGLAND.

Rise of Fiction in England.—The Stage.—Priority in Development of French Imaginative Literature.—The Voyages Imaginaires of Swift and De Foe.—Richardson compared with Marivaux.—The Preternatural School.—Reaction in favour of History, Scott.—And of Domestic Portraiture, Miss Austen.—Peculiar Sectarian Character of Modern Fiction.—Mr. Reade and Mr. Dickens equivalent to Howard and Bentham.—Effect on the Personal Character of the Author.—His Wide Sphere of Action.—Goldsmith.—Lord Macaulay.—The Popular Estimate of him rather Sensational than Intellectual.—The Lives of the Novelists Influenced their Works.—Condition of Literary Men in Goldsmith's Day.—Goldsmith Compared with Sterne.—His Colloquial Powers Contrasted with Johnson's.—His Curious Psychological Development.—His Literary Talents.—As an Imaginative Writer, as an Essayist, and as an Historian and Poet.—His View of European Literature Criticized.—The Sweetness of his Style.—Examination into the Style of the Commonwealth Writers, and the New School of Anne.—Boileau.—Addison.—Johnson.—Æsthetic Tastes of the latter.—Goldsmith, as a Dramatist, compared with Farquhar.—A Final Estimate of his Character.

THOSE who would trace the true rise of moral and rational fiction in England must go to the "Canterbury Tales." But the most prominent history of primitive English fiction is, in reality, the history of the stage. It is interesting to observe the difference of development in the imaginative literature of France and England. While we were compelled to go to Jonson and Shakspeare, our neighbours were enjoying the inimitable irony of Pantagruel and of Montaigne, who is to all intents and purposes as genuine a romancer as Lawrence Sterne. Our stage fiction anticipated theirs. Their prose fiction anticipated ours. Our Shakspeare preceded our Fielding.

They had their Rabelais before they had their Molière. The great revolutionary episode that ushered in the Stuart dynasty, while it effectually put a stop to the growth of dramatic fiction, strange to say, rendered itself remarkable by the production of two of the most marvellous fictitious creations that ever graced the literature of any country. While the French were poring over the "Romans de longue Haleine" of Gomberville, Calprenède, and Madame Scuderi, all unsophisticated England was suspended on the adventures of the Pilgrim Christian. And while Milton was shadowing out the topography of hell, the courtiers of the Louvre were duly travelling the "Carte du pays de Tendre," sailing down the river "d'Inclination," and the lake "Indifference," to the villages of "Jollisvers" and "Epîtres Galantes," or the towns of "Petits Soins" and "Tendre sur Estime."

The Restoration produced a new era, or rather it reproduced, as far as fiction was concerned, the characteristics of the era preceding the rebellion. It still lingered on the boards of the theatre, though the spirit of theatrical literature, sharing as it had done with politics, with morals, and even with language, in the great reaction against governmental monasticism, had little in common with that which prompted "Lear" or the "Alchemist." I have elsewhere illustrated the features peculiar to the drama of this epoch. Off the stage imagination produced little, and that little deeply impregnated with the prevailing spirit. I am not going to criticize the productions of Mrs. Manley or Mrs. Behn. They may do so, who have the patience. The *voyages imaginaires* of Swift and De Foe, on the other hand, must not be passed over. They bear the same relation to real voyages and travels as romances do to history and biography. Of De Foe I have already spoken, and as this is rather a view of the history of fictitious literature, than a criticism of par-

ticular fictions, I shall not stop to speak of Swift. Most persons have made up their minds about "Gulliver's Travels." There is one feature in its composition, perhaps, which I may point out, the tact with which the author has confined himself to the use of the ordinary phenomena of nature. He has exaggerated, but nothing more. We shall the more readily appreciate his skill, if we compare his work with the "True History of Lucian" for example, with its rivers of wines, its seas of milk, and its islands of cheese.

If we except the pleasing allegories and tales of the "Spectator" and "Rambler," it may with safety be said that the House of Hanover ushered in a new style of fiction. The novels of Richardson and his compeers did for England, what the novels of Madame La Fayette and of Marivaux did for France; and the same praise that Voltaire applied to the French might be applied to the English artists: "*Les premières où l'on vit les mœurs.*" Fiction now, for the first time, exhibited a varied vitality. Its object, I am disposed to think, may be considered reactionary to the Caroline morality. Its subject-matter was domestic life. It was still, however, strictly imaginative. The heroines of Richardson are as much monsters in virtue, as Dryden's were in heroism, or Wycherley's in vice. It cannot be said to have succeeded in its aim, though that aim was a good one. Nevertheless, its insipidities were far preferable to the stimulating marvels of Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, and the supernatural school.

To this school a very happy reaction sprang up, and fiction, from dealing in the extremes of imagination, went round into the sobrieties of history. The empire of fiction was now divided. The taste for historical romance, as it was inculcated by its great founder Scott, flourishes apace. But fiction recurred in part to its original design, and the portraiture of domestic life revived. Miss Austen is, in

this light, the legitimate successor of Richardson and Goldsmith, as Sir Bulwer Lytton, Mr. James, and Mr. Ainsworth are the nominal successors of Scott. These two departments, history and domestic life, fiction seems to have monopolized. But a new and very striking feature, peculiar to the age, has been introduced into it.

I have said incidentally in my view of Milton, that the State is fast loosening its hold upon the individual, and I added that, by way of compensation, sectarianism has seized upon the prey the State is surrendering. The search would be in vain to find a period wherein society is more absorbed, I will not say by politics, but by party. There never was, in fact, an era in which the effects of private liberty have developed themselves in so many sections, each section marked out by distinct, sharp, uncompromising outlines. This sectional spirit of antagonism—social, theological, and political antagonism—monopolizes everything. It would astonish some persons to realize how keenly and how practically the idea of party leavens their daily intercourse, taints even the conceptions of their domestic lives; and while they congratulate themselves that they are less and less liable to the interference of the State, is making them each day more and more liable to the interference of a Corporation.

It is literature, and more especially imaginative literature, that I would indicate as assuming this sectional appearance. Historical literature, we know, has always been party-spirited. It has always had more of the pamphlet than of history in it, though even in purely historical literature there is now interwoven an elaborated philosophy, a partisanship, an interpenetrating speciality, if I may use the term in the place of special pleading, more earnest, more refined, more exquisitely laboured, and more subtly intermingled, and such as the Oldmixons

and Macaulays of the last century never dreamed of. It would be easy to exemplify the domineering manner in which sectionalism intrudes into even the most trifling diversions of the imagination. It seems, indeed, as though the imagination had arrogated to itself the rights of interpretership to the great social world about it, the right of doing what pamphlets did a century ago. The intellect thus appears to respond to the manias of society. For example, is there a Roman mania? forthwith a family of novels appear, none without a sly Jesuit in it. Or a socialistic mania? a dozen incarnations of educated Wat Tylers, in the shape of philosophic tailors, rise on the arena. Is it a religious or philosophic mania in divinity or metaphysics? we are instantly transported to Alexandria to be lectured by a woman. Or an anti-slavery mania? all the eloquence of Wilberforce moves less than the heroes who spring up in Virginia and Maryland.

A novel literally does the duty of a social reformer. Everything is objective. We are becoming a dramatic people. The dry form of the tract or speech is eschewed. People must be stimulated through their feelings. Their sense of conviction must be got at through their sense of the pathetic, or their sense of the ridiculous. A prison reform, for example, is required! Nothing less will satisfy them than a scenic representation of the old abuses, the hard-hearted gaoler, the culprit, and all the instruments of torture. The delays of political and civil justice are complained of! The red tape office must be satirized in detail. Government must be depicted in caricature. Somebody must do for official life what Hogarth did for social, and Gilray for ministerial. All its comedy must be acted over with the proper gesticulation, dress, and wardrobe. A roar is raised, and the remedy follows. Seriously, Mr. Charles Reade and Mr. Charles Dickens take the place of Howard and Bentham.

By thus becoming partisan, literature has undoubtedly raised the tone of its profession, and the character of its professors. It is not difficult for an author now-a-days to acquire an importance scarcely inferior to that of the founder of a new religion. He is a potentiality in the State. He wields an influence which writers who merely wrote to amuse and instruct never could have wielded. Instruction and amusement simply, are no longer his objects. The tendency now is to found schools of opinion. He is accordingly the archpriest of some sect, or school. He numbers his disciples by the thousand. According to his power and opportunities, he is regarded with a reverence and an attachment, none the less that not one of those thousand disciples ever caught a glimpse of his features, save what the frontispiece to their favourite volume afforded them. Nor is the tyranny he exercises over their minds the weaker for his bodily absence. With the sceptre of his pen, he has their intellects and their hearts under magic control. All the organized machinery by which opinion is propagated is at his command, and he has his own public organs, as he has his own private coteries. In return for this devotion, he himself owes a kind of allegiance, very irritating and very troublesome, but indispensable, to his followers. He is under perpetual surveillance, lives in a harassing state of publicity. Notoriety follows him wherever he goes. The eye of society is watching him with interest. The common curiosity pries even into his domestic habits. If he gives a lecture, it is known in a few hours from one end of Britain to the other, what he said, and whether in what he said he was true to his writings, and to himself. If he sets out on his travels, every merchant on 'Change knows what capital is to be honoured with his presence, —Paris, Berlin, or Rome,—before the packet which con-

veys him has crossed the channel. A notoriety is attached to his coat, that was never attached to Goldsmith's bloom-coloured suit. He vies with statesmen and crowned heads in giving his name to articles of apparel and articles of consumption. He is not indeed without his reward in the interval. Ladies lionize him at conversaziones by day, and soirées by night. He is the toast at public dinners, and the president at public charities. The platform yearns after him. Political constituencies offer him a seat in Parliament free of expense. Universities give him their very professorships. And cities present him with their freedom in gold boxes.

It may be doubted whether the very provoking scrutiny maintained by society over authors is not carried to the extreme. It is a wholesome rule that literary reputation should be affected by personal reputation, but in identifying the two, gossip is ultimately made the arbitress of intellectual renown. Sometimes, as in the case of Byron, the author benefits, while the man suffers. More commonly it is the reverse. But again it is not, in moderation, without a very beneficial influence. Society, by recognizing no divorce between the author and the man, makes the former dependent on the latter. He may not be a statesman, but he must be an experienced man of the world. He may not be a priest, but he must be a gentleman, both in habit and expression. He cannot separate the preaching from the practice. He may caricature the imbecilities of class and rank, but he must be himself free from affectation. He may satirize the vicious, but he must be himself free from vice. He does not lose his personality, as his predecessors did. He imparts, on the contrary, his own reputation to his work. The reader not unfrequently respects the book, because he respects the writer of it. Neither reader nor publisher would tolerate a caste of men, giving their spare

minutes to the desk, which they could win from the glass and the dice-box.

Macaulay has observed that Goldsmith has been singularly fortunate in his biographers. I am of opinion that he has been fortunate only in the same degree that a man is fortunate, who has his deformities illustrated by a skilful rather than a clumsy hand, as that renowned nobleman of petulant memory, for instance, was fortunate in having his blotches and pimples delineated with such disgusting fidelity by the spiteful brush of Hogarth. To have one's features drawn by a distinguished painter, or one's life written by an industrious biographer, is certainly a distinguished honour, and so it is to be shot with silver bullets or drowned in a butt of Malmsey. *Ignotum pro magnifico*, is a happy idea, and one to which the imagination readily assents. Mystery is a rare magnifier. Half the most glowing phenomena of history blaze with a negative fire. Half its most brilliant characters, like glowworms, are seen to best advantage in the dark, or like certain crystals, are transparent only till they are held up to the sun. Obscurity is their atmosphere. The more misty it is, the better it conducts their scattered rays. A beam through a chink can disperse them. A single page of O'Meara's "Diary" or Sir Hudson Lowe's "Memoirs" can destroy the dazzling effect of a whole library of imperial bulletins. Had as little light been shed on Bacon as on Shakspeare, the gloom that overshadows the reputation of Bacon would have become invisible, and left his character as clear in the eyes of the world as Shakspeare's!

Messrs. Prior and Foster have undoubtedly increased the general acquaintance with Goldsmith, but it is not certain that they have not in proportion diminished the general respect for him. There are few men whose characters could stand observation better than Johnson's.

Yet it is a question whether even Johnson's character, nicely balanced as it is between excellencies and defects, has not been prejudiced by exposure. Goldsmith's is precisely the character to make a man a very scorn and derision to them that are round about him, a character that a man would, if possible, hide from those of his own household. Yet few characters have been more thoroughly, more intimately explored. He was vain, fickle, frivolous, and dissipated, an inharmonious compound of the simple virtues of the cradle, and the nubile vices of the club-house. As long as we take a superficial view of him, overlook the shadows cast by the angles of his moral organism, we are as kindly disposed to him as we can be towards so much intelligence paralyzed by so much infirmity. When we read him through the spectacle of his books, we feel admiration for him as a man of letters. When we turn from his book to his biography, our admiration on reflection becomes adulterated with a feeling that scarcely stops at pity.

There is, I am aware, a good deal of irrational sentimentality associated with the memory of Goldsmith. To some minds there is a charm attaching itself to his very failings, that defies the sober hand of the moralist. Even those who look with suspicion on the roystering guardsman Steele, and have not a good word for the artistic sensibility of Sterne, compensate for their want of charity by the unctuous sacrifices they pay to the good nature of the author of the "Traveller." Unprincipled dissipation in Sterne and Steele are softened down into improvidence in him. Thus a recent lecturer and critic speaks of his truthfulness with all the emphasis that notes of admiration can supply. Yet he is continually writing letters to his relatives full of boastful mendacity, at a time when he might have sate for the original of Hogarth's distressed poet. The fact requires no comment,

save the passing observation how the vices of a character may be made to shrink and contract at the genial presence of a single chivalric virtue, such as generosity. On some such one-sided principle knight-errantry still holds undivided sway over the hearts of school-girls and marching ensigns. That he was popular is evident from the pains that such men as Johnson took to justify him, and such men as Boswell to malign him. But his popularity, I suspect, was owing to the very failings which those who befriended him most, were most anxious in deprecating. His intellectual reputation was generally allowed to supply the place of his moral. He made a good companion at the Turk's Head. And no one was disposed to deny his hand to the man who was much too good-natured to provoke envy, and much too wrong-headed to excite respect. I am not convinced that much of his eccentricity was not affected at first, and that like Fielding's wag who counterfeited stuttering till he could not open his lips without a stutter, his oddities produced by affectation were finally confirmed by habit. He certainly gave way most systematically to his deficiencies without the slightest energetic attempt at correcting them. That he was conscious of them is evident from the manner in which he adapts them to his various creations, whom he represents elsewhere as "rivalling angels and imitating brutes." The famous portrait of the author, in his "View of Polite Learning in Europe," is nothing more or less than a very thinly disguised duplicate of Goldsmith himself. "He is a child of the Republic, he writes, for while he is able to direct others, how incapable is he found of guiding himself! His simplicity exposes him to all the insidious approaches of cunning; his sensibility to the slightest invasion of contempt." Nay, more, so strong was the *mens conscia culpæ* that he not only made use of his short-comings for

illustrations, but he did not hesitate openly to caricature them in his fictitious characters; in his Honeywood and Lofty in the "Good-natured Man," in Higgins in the "Haunch of Venison," and in the Black Man in the "Citizen of the World." He did everything but correct them. His friends are content that he had the candour to acknowledge them, forgetting that confession is not always repentance.

The events attending Goldsmith's entrance into the world are too familiar to need depicting. Those who inherit toothpicks or tobacco-holders cut from the hawthorn bush of Lissoy, or who believe, with Sir Walter Scott, that Lissoy was the type of the Deserted Village, may associate the scenes of his youth with Auburn. There is one argument that might assist their conviction, namely, the copiousness with which Goldsmith has usually drawn on his own history for the history of his imaginative creations. He has been, in every respect but that of writing his biography, his own biographer. Nor, indeed, do I confine the remark to Goldsmith alone; the feature is characteristic of all the writers of fiction of that day. If any intelligent reader were to be asked what constituted the most distinguished points of contrast between the writers of fiction of that period and the present, he would undoubtedly, in his reply, lay particular emphasis on the strong air of reality and fact in the productions of the one period, compared with the palpable fictitiousness of the other. Nowhere, indeed, do we meet with such powers of realizing, accompanied, at the same time, with such powers of originating. And those who are familiar with what process a writer of kindred reputation among ourselves has attained a corresponding facility, will hit upon a proper explanation of the phenomenon. The mission of the fictitious writers of Goldsmith's time was a practical protest against that

fabling extravagance which Walpole caricatured in his "Castle of Otranto," and that fantastic dramatic narrative which for the flattery of an episodic taste had been enunciated through the medium of the stage, and was rapidly passing away with the generation that had heard the wit of Congreve confounded by the morality of Collier. Such a mission, it was plain, required writers not formed in the studio or the academy. Personal experience and constant contact with their fellow-men could alone educate them for the task.

And such an education they had. The works of Richardson, of Fielding, of Smollett, of Sterne, and of Goldsmith were not the fruits of a fancy rich and at leisure. Their authors had been no carpet-knights, but had lived and acted the lives of their heroes; they had been men of the world from their youth upwards. The familiarity which Fielding had attained with human nature was acquired by a process the very reverse of Richardson. He had passed from a life of honourable independence to a life of ruin and debauchery. His extravagance at Stowe, his house and equipage, his stud and kennel, the splendour of his table, sufficiently speak to the imprudence of their master. But had it not been for this imprudence, to whom must the student of English literature have looked for such delineations of English character as Squire Western and Black George. Lady Mary Wortley Montague sneers at his occupation of "Trading Justice of the Peace for Westminster and Middlesex," the highest end of his preferment being to rake in the lowest seats of vice and misery. It is true that his office was not a very respectable one; that the functionaries who held it wrung a precarious existence out of thieves and pick-pockets; and that "the dirtiest wages on earth," as poor Fielding himself called it, reduced him to the necessity of finding companionship in a poor blind brother and

three wild Irishmen, and of being content with a dinner off a leg of cold mutton, and a bone of ham, all in one dish, and the dish on a dirty cloth ; yet notwithstanding these plebeian disqualifications, it is very problematical whether even Lady Mary Wortley Montague could have given us " Tom Jones," " Jonathan Wild," or " Amelia." Who but Smollett, the ex-mate of a ship, and a vagabond on the face of the earth, could have imagined Oakum and Whiffe, Trunnion and Pipe, Hatchway, Bowler, and Jack Ratlin. We do not know much of Sterne's life, but the knowledge we do possess is quite enough to convince us that the experience of that life had no small influence on the characters of his works ; that the inimitable adventures of Yorick, Uncle Toby, and Corporal Trim were but a stereotype picture of Sterne's own existence in the barracks of Carrickfergus and the Isle of Wight ; and that the tour through France, in company with La Fleur, prompted the exquisite sketches, unsurpassed by the master-hands of Cervantes and Le Sage, of the Monk of Calais and the dead ass of Nampont. His acquaintance with the garrets of Grub Street, the dens of St. Martin, and the haunts about Lincoln Fields, taught Johnson how to write his " London."

Nor was Goldsmith at all wanting in these peculiar qualifications. His life was sufficiently erratic. His youth had been passed under the care of a village pedagogue, whose boast it was to have served as a quarter-master in the service of his sovereign Lady Queen Anne, and whose chief pretension to teaching was a strong taste for enlivening the tedium of Virgil by instilling anecdotes of Peninsular prowess into ears already too familiar with the stories of " Freney the Robber," and other spirited biographies of Hibernian knight-errantry. From thence, with no farther injury than a quickened imagination, and an initiation into that happy indifference of temperament

which in after years was to leave him dreaming of the wealth of Peruvian mines, while the baker was hinting at the Court of Requests, and the milkwoman holding her tally in vain, the boy was sent to a seminary at Edgeworth's-town, where he picked up with some strolling players and minstrels, and from whence he entered as a sizar at Dublin, where he puzzled over "Burgersdicius" and "Singlesius," with a tutor who was notorious through the town for his ferocity and strength, and whose destiny it was to be murdered by the girl he had seduced. Such an education was not likely to fit him for the sobrieties of a profession. Accordingly, one is not surprised to find him owning an escape from the restraint of ordination, as some say, to the colour of his breeches, and ridding himself of the patronage of an uncle who wished to make a lawyer of him, by going to Edinburgh, under pretence of walking the hospitals, and then wandering up and down Italy and the Continent, like his philosophic vagabond George Primrose, under the pretence of studying medicine under the great Albinus at Leyden.

Goldsmith's early lot in London was undoubtedly a hard one. He made his appearance just at the close of that barren transition period to the man of letters, which we are accustomed to associate by way of contrast with the time when Johnson, just fresh from college, was rambling about the street by midnight with Savage, wringing off knockers, and knocking down watchmen, and the time when in receipt of honours and a pension, he had long ago set the mark of infamy upon the unwomanly brow of Savage's mother. He came too late to enjoy the fruits of aristocratic patronage, and a little too early to reap the advantages of public patronage.

All the amenities of literature had passed. Private patronage, that feudal patronage which had sheltered

Gower and Chaucer in the halls of princes, had already dwindled down into the miserable pittance which Dryden had received at the hands of Sir William Pickering, and Swift, the last of the domestic pensioners, at the hands of Sir William Temple. That miserable system, so rife at the Restoration, which had made the hireling author as familiar at the Court of Charles, as the Whitefriars' bulldog had been at the Court of James, which had produced such toads as the Settles and Crownes, and such episodes as the Rose Alley ambuscade, had happily expired, the moment that Johnson quitted the chamber of Chesterfield for the counting-house of Osborne. The benefits derived to literary men by the Revolution, when with the rise of popular factions and the development of Parliamentary privileges, it had created a new kind of polemical writer, by creating a new kind of polemical literature, as distinct from the political literature of the Restoration as the "Dissensions at Athens" and the "True-born Englishman" were distinct from the "Hind and Panther" and the "Absalom and Achitophel," had been crushed by the coarse and undiscerning policy of the tasteless Walpole. The day when a dinner at my Lord Somers' could procure a poor poet invitations for a week, or an airing in my Lord Oxford's chariot, has supplied him with a citizen coach for every occasion after; the day when Swift, to use his own words, so often used before, saw Harley pass through a swarm of titled clients with his wand of office in his hand, to greet Parnell; the day when Swift himself could overthrow the regularity of a Minister's household, and dictate the guests of a Minister's table, had gone by. There were, indeed, still a few of the understrappers of literature, slaves of the backstairs, wretches who span out a life of bondage to die a death of misery; hirelings prostituting their talents for gold, and left to perish broken-hearted, of starvation, raving mad, in gaols, in

foreign lands, without a friendly hand to close their eyes, without even the last repose of a decent grave. But with the Guthries, the Hornes, the Oldmixons, the Arnolds, the Amhersts, and the Drakes, Goldsmith would make no alliance. If he must be a slave, the bookseller, not the Minister, should be his patron. The bondage of the Griffiths was better than the bondage of the Walpoles. The change for the better had set in, however, long before he died. That he might have been respectable, and even rich, we have his own words for believing. His confession was that he could have earned any time four pounds a day. In one of his papers in the "Bee," on the Augustan Age of England, we find him writing that "a man who can be prudently content to catch the public, is certain of living without dependence. More, Savage and Amherst felt all the miseries that usually attend the ingenious and imprudent, that attend men of strong passions, and *no phlegmatic reserve*." A man who had the sense to make these remarks, and not be guided by them, deserved to share their fate. He reminds us of the prisoner of the Fleet, declaiming on the danger of the French invasion to English liberty through the bars of his cell, to the turnkey. "Young writers," he adds, "do generally encounter every hardship attending aspiring indigence. The old, and of established reputation, enjoy the more vulgar and prudent satisfaction of putting riches in competition with fame." It was Goldsmith's own fault, accordingly, that he would never grow old. This explanation accounts at once for the anomaly of his poverty by the side of Johnson's independence.

Without pretending to Lord Clarendon's penetration, who argued, that because Lord Falkland and Sidney Godolphin were small men, diminutiveness was a sign of genius in his day, it may be said that looseness was as much the mark of a wit in the time of Goldsmith, as a

beard was of a philosopher in the time of Lucian. The lives of such men as Savage and Boyce were the lives of highwaymen, continually demanding the generosity of society, and continually in want. The bookseller's hack was peculiarly open to the charge of reckless extravagance. To be able to accomplish his task in time for the printer's devil, was all the jobber's concern. To men who, like Goldsmith, possessed the happy knack of Bayle, of "reading with his five fingers," a few days miserable seclusion was all that was required. A strong paroxysm of idleness and extravagance succeeded to the paroxysm of study and application. A night or two at the tavern or at Ranelagh compensated for the mouldy crust, the fireless grate of the garret. A short time, and the wages of intellectual labour had gone to enrich the coffers of the faro-table, or the pocket of the nearest sharper.

It was his peculiar conformation of character, however, that most conspicuously paralyzed Goldsmith's progress in the world. It is well known that he laughed at Sterne as a dull fellow, yet if I were disposed to associate him with any of his contemporaries, it would be with the author of "Yorick." In temperament a whole list of phenomena might identify the two. The reckless disregard of consequences, so characteristic of Sterne's magnetic philosophy, the want of discretion which he contemptuously described as the "understrapping virtue," that genial joviality which made Warburton despair of his reform, the inharmonious want of balance between the man and the writer, that puzzled his Cambridge tutors, the eccentric levity that made Gray tremble to hear him preach, the tender susceptibility to affection that has linked his name so sweetly with his "Lydy," the rash insensibility to the experience of the hour, which compelled him at last to hire a pane in a stationer's shop, to advertise his pen for hire, and finally consigned him to

die in the strange hands of hirelings, each idiosyncrasy finds its counterpart in those incidents which make up the sum of Goldsmith's moral and physical existence. Half his troubles through life took their rise in his thoughtlessness, developing itself in various ways, in his generosity, his extravagance and vanity. His very virtues were out of tune. So little heroism of purpose had he, that those emotions which should have been the result of deliberation and will, were in him simply the fruits of animal excitement and sensation. Thus, he was generous without method, extravagant without motive, and vain without control. At Dublin he was known to have slept all night in the inside of a feather bed, which he had ripped open as a substitute for the blankets he had bestowed on a poor street singer and her naked children, and in London, in the midst of his difficulties, he would unhesitatingly give his last penny to any adventurer who was at the pains to stimulate his bounty by the shallowest tale of distress.

Such inconsiderateness, it must be confessed, is venial ; but the want of discipline which made him yield to the impulse of feeling, ceased to be pardonable, when it betrayed itself in the gratification of personal caprice. No one would overlook that unscrupulousness that made him waste his earnings at the whist-table, at a time when he had but a single chair in his room, when he had determined on the necessity of giving up hot suppers, and sugar in his tea, and when he actually contemplated an expedition to the factories of the Coromandel coast. It is difficult to realize a man so morbidly inadequate to self-denial, that he should be compelled by want to stop up his grate with brick-bats, to go without coal, and be in debt to his milkman, and who, notwithstanding, should be required to be warned by a schoolmistress, to whose husband he had been 'prenticed, to "give some one his

wages to take care of, as the young gentlemen's were." There were few of the enjoyments of the luxurious that he did not have a share in. He indulged in propensities above his means and station, as unscrupulously as if he had been Villiers Duke of Buckingham himself. He gambled, and staked his last penny with as much indifference as old Manners. Some demon whispered, "Have a taste!" as into Sir Visto's ear, and forthwith, at his death, his tailor's bill amounted to hundreds. It was not his extravagance only. A feeling of vanity, curiously irreconcilable with his general organization, led him into some strange inconsistencies. Sometimes he would consent without the slightest sensibility to that feeling which Churchill said was as when a man cut away a piece from his own flesh, to blot out half a play to please a bad critic, or to believe that Alexander was contemporary with Montezuma, to please a quizzing friend; at other times he would choke with grief, stamp, and swear eternal silence, because a second-rate performance had not brought him a fortune. Sometimes his vanity would take a personal form, and he would keep company with none but Beauclerc, Burke, and such like, though twenty-four hours had not elapsed since he had been roystering it at the Globe Tavern or the Wednesday Club, where a pig-butcher might call him "Noll! old boy!" and pat him on the back. His appearance, indeed, in such fits of fastidiousness, is hardly less ridiculous than that of a man afflicted with elephantiasis who should be curious in the cut of his boots. It was a spasmodic pride that seized him suddenly, and left him suddenly. Under its influence he would make any sacrifice rather than consent to the superiority of a rival—jump into a pool at Versailles at the risk of his gentility, or into a ditch at Lord Harrington's, at the risk of a bran new silk coat, and an unpaid-for pair of magni-

ficent ruffles. Sometimes, his spirit of emulation took the appearance of literary envy. Boswell, who like most idolaters would have every one bow down and worship the idol he had set up, has recorded, with the jealousy of a devotee, any ineffectual hostility to the shrine of Johnson. The domineering demeanour of Johnson was proverbial wherever the moralist circulated. The irritability of his temper, the indulgence of a feeling of personal superiority, or, it may be, the exhibition of a brusque independence, flattered by the common consent of society, was felt and resented repeatedly. To the sensitive mind of Goldsmith, who was rising, as Johnson had risen, to an eminence that did not belong to him originally, and of which he might be naturally jealous, the airs of rivalry were particularly galling. The author of the "Rambler," it is true, was at least twenty years the senior of the author of the "Vicar of Wakefield." But the latter forced at times from one extreme to the other, from the helplessness of an infant to the arrogance of a full-fledged wit, now and then failed to make allowance for the consequence which age will always be entitled to assume. Every one recollects the occasion, so graphically but so spitefully commemorated by Boswell, when, at a dinner at Dilly's, the bookseller, he failed to distract the attention of the company from the stertorous voice of Johnson, and "like a baffled gamester," taking up his hat to rush from the room, yet lingered "to vent his spleen under pretext of supporting Toplady," he was rewarded for the interruption by Johnson saying (sternly), 'Sir, I am not interrupting the gentleman! I was only giving him a sequel of my attention. Sir! you are impertinent!' Silence was sometimes his safest course. The scene at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, connected with the joke about sending discoloured peas to Hammersmith, as the way to *Turn'em Green*, can still extract a laugh from

any one who is malicious enough to take pleasure in the misfortunes of blundering genius.

It is not much to be wondered at that he failed in contact with Johnson. Johnson combined in his manner not a little of the dogmatism of Warburton and the petulance of Dennis. He did not converse. He dictated. Circumstances, and his own fearless spirit, had placed him on the pinnacle of the literary world. Accordingly, he acted as though he wished to make the republic of letters a monarchy, and himself the monarch. What Collier said of Henry VIII. in his controversy with Luther, may be applied to him. He leans too much upon his character, argues in his garter-robcs, and writes, as it were, with his sceptre. Disraeli has suggested that Goldsmith may, without any perversion of intellect, have sometimes instituted a favourable contrast between himself and Johnson. This, however, can hardly be predicated of him. He was the last man in the world to be guilty of any serious jealousy in that direction. However momentary pique may sometimes have aroused his emulation, in reality he cared little apparently for his literary reputation. He was what Congreve and Gray, with fantastic foppery, pretended to be—totally indifferent to the title of a man of letters. He wrote in order that he might live, and at last he regarded literature too much as a trade to be vain of it. With regard to his conversation, it must be acknowledged that the standard of his colloquial excellence was generally considered to be below par, the deficiency not being so much in quantity as in quality. The idea, from Garrick's famous sarcasm that he talked like poor Poll, is that he prattled too much. His demeanour was the very reverse of Dryden's, who described himself as slow and dull in talk, reserved and saturnine in humour. His garrulity, to judge from the ordinary accounts, was anything but confined. Pope's character

of Gay seems rather to fit him. "He was a natural man, without design, who spake what he thought and just as he thought it." Neither the excellences nor the deficiencies of conversational attainments indeed will ever be the criterion, by which a discriminating judge would be disposed to decide on the literary merits of the highest or the humblest in the walks of literature. He would not deny the claims of Addison because he could not open his lips in company, or exaggerate the claims of Johnson because he talked to his monarch in the gallery of Whitehall, just as he talked in the drawing-room of Streatham Park, or the back parlour of Fleet Street. The accomplishments of the drawing-room are the accomplishments of any man who has the nerve to converse with briskness and to listen with complacency. They are the accomplishments of manner, not of intellect, the superfluous ornaments, not the mainstay of the structure. We are fascinated with the address of a Chesterfield, but we do not blame a writer, because to the reputation of a great essayist he does not add the reputation of a great beau, any more than we combine in a necessary union the statesman with the historian. No one would maintain, for instance, that Walpole ought not to be classed in the ranks of British statesmen because he did not know who Empson and Dudley were, or Pitt in the rank of British orators, because he was ignorant, or heedless, of the rules which preserve the etiquette of the British House of Commons.

I have lingered thus on the exculpation of Goldsmith's fame, by way of correcting a very growing disposition to estimate his abilities by the ridiculous proportions to which they are reduced by the malice of Boswell, who was continually maligning him behind his back, who, had it not been for his connection with Johnson, would probably have taken no notice of him,

and who was not worthy, with all his faults, to unloose the latchet of his shoes. In spite of the offensive contrast, which the hand of the artist has so skilfully elaborated, nowhere do the amiabilities of Johnson appear so captivating as in his intercourse with Goldsmith. The interest which he takes in his welfare reminds one of that of a father towards his son. He uses every artifice that affection could suggest to cure him of his eccentricities. He rebukes his extravagance by refusing to taste his dinner, and he compliments the poverty of his room and his attire by some such graceful remark as "*Nil te quæsieris extra.*" He keeps his failings and misdeeds a profound secret, and grieves when he sees them voluntarily exposed. He revises his poems for him, sells his manuscript for ready money, sits in the front box to laugh—as only he could laugh—his comedy into success, and when his purse is empty, and Goldsmith could bear any disease better than the *malade de pèche*, replenishes it from his own. It was this good heart under a rough manner that the latter testified his appreciation for, when he characterized his friend as having "nothing of the bear about him but his skin."

To return to Goldsmith's character. Few men have exhibited so strongly the extremes of great speculative wisdom and great practical imprudence. In point of intellectual qualifications he was not much below a genius. In point of moral or psychological development he was very little above Casper Hauser. His intelligence predominated over his judgment, as tyrannically as his sensibility over his will. The schism between genius and character was complete. Every noodle of a waiter that handed him his sassafras at the club, thought himself entitled to laugh at his stupid good nature, yet this overgrown baby, as he has been called, could set his mark on such men as Johnson and Burke, and write a poem

nearly as venomous as the "Dunciad." Any child could shake his faith in his knowledge of history, yet he has thrown over history the tender graces of a style that might have awaked the envy of Lyttleton and Blackstone. There was no one who had a more slovenly appreciation of the exactitudes of science, yet he wrote a book on a subject demanding the closest scientific acumen, which is still read by a generation in possession of "Buffon" and the "Bridgewater Treatises." Nor is the anomaly confined to his intellectual structure. Morally speaking, he was as singular a bundle of inconsistencies as ever puzzled phrenology. His childish fits of temper, his childish fits of mirth, his quickness to take offence, his quickness to forgive it, his vanity in the wrong place, his want of spirit in the right place, his exaggerated pride, his exaggerated humility, his extravagant spleen, his extravagant benevolence, together make up a creature not to be reconciled or explained in notes of admiration, or eleemosynary epithets. Nor does it at all clear up the phenomena that sensible men to this day are still found, who cannot approach his memory without falling into ecstasies that would misbecome a dancing dervish. His fate at his death was perhaps equally strange. His face during life had been so ugly that children turned from it with affright, yet women crowded round his coffin to get a lock of his hair. He could not rest on his death-bed for the thoughts of the bailiff and creditor that every artifice of extravagance had brought on him, yet Johnson, who would not sit at table with Fielding, pronounced him a very great man and wrote his epitaph. Walpole called him an idiot, yet the tidings of his decease could draw the tear of regret from the eye of Burke, and arrest the pencil of Reynolds. His reckless good nature, perhaps, his inartificiality of manner, was at the bottom of it all.

It destroyed his character, but won him a reputation. It was at once the bane and the antidote. Like the weapon that pierced Telephus, it gave the wound and supplied the cure for it. If we were allowed to judge him as the schoolmen judged their saints and doctors, and as he himself fancifully judged his Chinese philosopher, we should not be far off the mark if we said he had genius at the maximum degree, common sense as one.

No man's literary talents come more within the scope of the critic than his. His writings partook strongly of his character. Candid simplicity, unaffected plainness, are symptomatic of both. His sentiments are as free from elaborations as his demeanour. He aimed at no fictitious attractiveness, and the attractions which draw us to him as by a natural impulse we recognize to be without guile and without design. His artlessness is well displayed in the undisturbed naïveté with which he repudiates a charge of inculcating absolute doctrines in his *History of England*. "God knows I have no thought for or against liberty in my head; my whole aim being to make a book of a decent size, and which, as Richard says, would do no harm to nobody." This is Goldsmith all over. Warburton editing "*Shakspeare*," Bentley editing "*Milton*," is hardly a more incongruous picture than the author of the "*Vicar of Wakefield*" battling with the Whigs about standing armies and the divine right of kings. Political biases he had none, or if he had, they were easily dispelled, or else idly assumed. We may well believe that a man with so little tone in his private opinions would not be very dogmatic in his expression of them, or at the most only formally so.

His fame as a writer of imagination rests principally on his "*Vicar of Wakefield*." Like the "*Crusoe*" of De Foe, it has survived all those other works of the reason, which he might have been disposed to value

most. It is by this that he is most vulgarly known amongst us. In spite of the absurdities of plot, and it may be through that very deficiency which Cumberland cast in its teeth, namely, want of grandeur of design, it still has a charm for youth and age. The characters, as may be expected, are strongly in keeping with the associations of their author. Dr. Primrose, with his wise saws and foolish deeds, is Goldsmith, without Goldsmith's townish vices. The blunder about the green spectacles is only the story of the white mice in another form, and the tale of Mr. Jenkinson and the check is only the counterpart of the Frenchman and the fabulous History of England. Mrs. Primrose, it is suggested, is from the model of his mother, and the rest of the family, with their unsophisticated habits and ways, he might easily have found types for, by casting back his thoughts to the time when he too thought cross purposes the highest stretch of human wit, and an evening spent in a game of questions and command, enlivened by "Johnny Armstrong's last Good-night," the highest pitch of human happiness. His "Vicar" indeed ranks among those productions which owe their existence to the development of certain strong idiosyncracies in the composition of their compositor's temperaments. It would be mentioned with those creations which bear not only the impress of locality, as the "Koran" and the "Divine Comedy," but the impress of individuality, as the "Pilgrim's Progress," or the "Grace Abounding" of Bunyan, the "Biography" of Boswell, the "Tristram Shandy" of Sterne, and the "Cain" of Byron.

His "Essays" are not so much read as they deserve. The "Adventures of a Strolling Player," and the papers on "Ennui," on the "Cultivation of a Taste for the Belles Lettres and a Taste for Poetry," may stand for wit and humour with the best of the "Tatlers" and

"Spectators." The allegory of "Assem," the man-hater, is inferior to the visions of Mirza only in the character of its subject. His "Chinese Letters," more generally known as the "Citizen of the World," is more happy in its idea than its execution. Though it has been objected to as a portrait of the middle rather than of the upper ranks of society, it was nevertheless one of the best caricatures of natural manners and failings since the sarcasms of Captain Lemuel Gulliver.

In poetry, the author of "The Deserted Village" ranks not among the highest of the descriptive poets. There is a sweetness in the tone of his muse that recommends it to the memory, more than the verse of Thomson or any other of his druidical contemporaries. His praise is rather a negative one, that he was free from those classic allusions, that mythological idolatry, which has made the poetry of the eighteenth century as distinguished as the poetry of the seventeenth, and Pope, in spite of his protest in a letter to a Person of quality, as distinguished as Cowley, and to which Addison opposed the "Pastorals" of Ambrose Philips as an antidote. The viciousness of Goldsmith's most formal efforts never includes the Damons and Corydons, Phillises and Chloes, with which, as Dorset rather inelegantly sang,

"The poor town had tumbled so long."

It must be allowed to redound to his honour, that with his musical facility of versification he resisted the enticements of an age whose pastorals and eclogues were but faint echoes of Virgil and Theocritus, whose sylvan dramas were laid in Arcadia, and peopled with Fauns and Satyrs, where the sheep that browsed the grass of Windsor Forest were presided over by Pan, the crab-apples by Pomona, the tulips and buttercups by Flora, and where no guardian less ignoble than Cloacina dispensed the destinies of Fleet Ditch. It is in confirmation

of his antagonism to this meretricious taste that we find him elsewhere objecting to the revival of pastoral poetry in the hands of Guarini in Italy; though, indeed, the associations of locality sometimes apologize for eccentricities as much as the actual associations of the age, and we should be as little disposed to find fault with Guarini for transforming his abbés and nuns into shepherds and shepherdesses, as we are to blame Dante for mixing up Virgil and St. Peter, Purgatory and the River Styx.

There are some scenes in the "Deserted Village" of domesticated humility, which would almost anticipate the "Borough." Not that Goldsmith is to be associated with Crabbe for a moment. There was as much difference between Goldsmith and Crabbe as between Pope and Churchill. The rudeness of Crabbe presented the same contrast to the grace of Goldsmith, that the slovenly verse of Churchill did to the polished verse of Pope. The subjects of both Crabbe and Goldsmith were homely to a degree. Here the comparison ended. In manner they had nothing in common. In the delineation of their theme they differed utterly. There is more of fact, less of ideality, in Crabbe's poetry than in the poetry of any English writer, not excepting Chaucer. Goldsmith is undoubtedly to some extent historical; but his "Auburn" was seen with the eye of the imagination, not with the eye of the flesh. The material muse of Crabbe painted not the embellished life of the poet, but real life, such life as he met with in his parish at Aldborough. The ordinary colours of poetry, the vulgar materials of poets—sentimental swains and milkmaids, hawthorn groves, daisied meadows, and purling streams—he deserted for the haunts and the victims of human guilt and human misery; for the dens of crowded cities, the gin-shop, the prison, and the lazar-house. The Danaës and Tity-

ruses of fiction were converted into such delineations as Keene and Blaney, Clelia and Ellen Orford. He was essentially the poet of low life. His poetry, stands in the same relation to common poetry, that the "Beggars' Opera" does to the ordinary representations of the drama. Were we to search for his representative among prose writers, we should point to De Foe ; among painters, to the author of "Gin Lane" and the "Rake's Progress."

We come now to what may be considered one of Goldsmith's most ambitious attempts, his "View of the State of Polite Learning in Europe." As far as personal experience goes, he was as much authorized to write it as Æneas was to tell the tale of Troy. The best part, indeed, is the part which he ought to have written best, the part that relates to the inferior grade of the men of letters in England. His familiarity with the haunts and habits of all that beggarly crew, in lace or rags, from Kent Street to the Mall, from the Strand to St. Giles's, admirably qualified him to expatiate on what he calls the victims of the booksellers, the Ned Purdons, the Sales, and Mores. His familiarity has in one particular entirely warped his judgment. He takes decidedly too low a view of the character of the author. His own associations became so habitually demoralized, his tastes so vitiated, that, like the effect of brandy on the dram-drinker, his conscience had become callous to distinction. He describes the destiny of an author in terms that might have been consistent with the days of Butler and Otway, and, wittingly or unwittingly, concludes by giving to him qualifications that would have been repudiated with indignation by the poorest hack that ever snuffed his candle between finger and thumb. According to him, he is in the eyes of society a creature only adapted to make a pliant bow,

to have an immoderate friendship for a good table, and to be laughed at by an alderman. And this ill-deserved stigma is thrown on the discrimination of that society that knew how to reward soberness and temperance in Johnson. In his "Citizen of the World,"¹ it is true, he adopts a different tone, says a writer of real merit might easily be rich, and, consequently, though the ridicule of living in a garret might have been wit in the last age, continues so no longer, because no longer true.

It would be useless to take a view of his essay in all its details. There is one error pervading his argument relative to the decline of polite literature, as he despondingly regards it, which is rather amusing to the contemporaries of the Quarterlies of the nineteenth century. On the principle of *maximæ leges, corrupta civitas*, he proclaims the increase of criticism to be a fatal portent of decay, and exclaims on the existence of *two* Reviews in London. The fact being, he mistook the symptoms of the disease for the disease; his assertion that there was scarcely an error which criticism did not excuse or promote, only proving that the decay existed not so much in the general taste as in criticism itself, and that it was not so much a cause as an effect. Not long after, as an involuntary illustration of this decay, we find him returning to the old theory which Dryden had given up, after attempting to tag Milton's verse with rhyme, that "blank verse is one of the disagreeable instances of the prevailing pedantry." A poor process to adopt, it must be owned, of reforming criticism by such an abortion of it, and rather suggestive of the conduct of the Russian who courts his mistress by falling asleep in her lap.

His "Review of the State of Literature on the Continent" is by far the most unsatisfactory portion of

¹ Letter 84.

his performance. For Italy he mentions Metastasio and Maffei, and writes a good deal at the expense of the *virtuosi* and *filosophi*. In Germany, he passes over the author of the "Christiad," and can hear little more than the *nego, probo, distinguo*, of the Cartesians and Aristotelians. In Spain, he praises Marquis D'Ensenada for suppressing seminaries of monastic ignorance, and tells us that Padré Feypoo wrote a book of vulgar errors for their exposure. Count Tessin's "Letters to a Young Prince" he considers to be no bad beginning for Sweden; and for Denmark, we are informed in a sentence that the history of polite literature rose and fell there with the famous Baron Holberg, who, probably, would never have been mentioned had not his vagaries through Europe made him as notorious as Goldsmith himself. It is only at the close, by way of parenthesis, after deciding on the "low state of current literature in these countries," that he remarks, that Zeno, Algarotti, Goldoni, Muratori, and Stay, in Italy, Haller, Klopstock, and Rabner, in Germany, Muschenbrook and Gaubius in Holland, "deserve the highest applause." He does not even mention Beccaria or Tiraboschi, Buffon, Le Sage or Marmontel, Gessner or Kant, Boerhaave or Linnæus. It would be just as if a Frenchman of his day, La Harpe, for instance, in taking a view of polite learning in Europe, should descant on the degradation English literature had encountered in the hands of Rochester, Crowne, Tate, and Shadwell, without making any reference to the writers of Queen Anne's reign. A good deal of this superficiality is to be attributed to the haste with which he was compelled to strike off his compositions for the press, and to those miserable exigencies of the hack's existence which made him perform the feat of writing a "History of Greece" in five weeks, and Smollett the still more incredible achievement of throwing off the

voluminous history of twelve centuries in almost as many months. To the same cause may be attributed another characteristic of Goldsmith, the variety of topics which he handled. He is to be seen treating every subject, visiting every clime, familiar with every tongue, appearing as conversant with the advantages or disadvantages of the Seven Years' War, the Golden Treaty, and the question of trade to Spanish America, as with the rise of the Dutch republic, and the decline of the French parliaments; at one time criticizing Voltaire's controversy on tragedy with La Motte, the laws of Beau Nash, and the institutes of Francis Xavier; at another, discussing the physiological phenomena of sleep, and the medical properties of sleep's most fatal enemy—tea.

As far as the style of his composition is concerned, the most censorious critic would be bound to confirm the approbation awarded to it by the general judgment of his cotemporaries. There is a compactness and a succinctness about it very ungenial to the habits of the author, and hardly to be expected from a writer of his loose and dissipated disposition. "Style," said Buffon, "is the man." Dr. Arnold, following up the idea, has drawn up a plan for discovering the tastes of an historian by his works. I was always sceptically disposed towards such general aphorisms, and the example of Goldsmith does not dispel my mistrust. The man who should judge of *his* demeanour by his style, would, I am inclined to think, be as far wrong as that lady who concluded from Thomson's works that the poet was a good swimmer and an abstemious man. Johnson said that he could make his "Natural History" read like a Persian tale. This is his praise, and no trifling praise. There is a *curiosa felicitas*, a scrupulous delicacy, a something equally removed from dogmatism and a lisp, combining the charming deference of insinuation with the masculine

accentuation of philosophic judgment, which must have been peculiarly grateful to the generation which had not yet ceased to pine at the loss of the "Spectator." He belonged, indeed, in this respect rather to the age that was going out than to the age that was coming in. With the revolution that, headed by Johnson and Burke, was carrying back the style of English composition to the nervous phraseology of Hobbes, Dryden, Clarendon, and the writers of the Commonwealth, he would not connect himself. For the Gothic informality, the Teutonic impressiveness, of their Elizabethan ancestors, the writers of Queen Anne had no sympathy. Indeed, after the Revolution all incitement to independence at the expense of perspicuity, had become obsolete and unfashionable. The spread of knowledge had entailed on those whose business it was to communicate it, distinctness and ease ; the result was, a reactionary spirit set in. The ponderous folios of antiquity, pregnant with the large and elaborate argumentations of laborious study, addressed, as they had been, to minds not loath to see a favourite theory exhausted or a learned controversy illuminated by prolix proofs or accumulated dogmas, they treated as the button-maker of Goldsmith treated the rude luxury of the poet's garden. He conceived that as beauty in a button ought to be of regular pattern, so the same regularity ought to be maintained in a landscape ; accordingly, he clipped up the hedges and cut down the gloomy walks, made vistas upon the stables, and proclaimed himself a man of taste. To decorate the massive structures which others had built was their second-rate labour. At the art of adorning they were consummate workmen. The roughest granite lost its homeliness and its sublimity under their chaste and delicate chisel. But it would be a libel on originality to assign it as the characteristic of an era, a master critic of which, Addison,

complained that "we have little else left us but to represent the common sense of mankind in more strong, more beautiful, and more uncommon lights." With despair in their hearts and the saying of Boileau on their lips, "that wit and fine writing does not consist so much in advancing things that are new, as in giving to things that are old an agreeable turn," it was natural that they should have acquiesced tamely in the awkwardness of their situation. They had come at the eleventh hour. They found every province occupied. The sickles of others had already reaped the full crop of wisdom. Such was their argument. Even Goldsmith was affected at first by the same despondency,—though he afterwards took courage and corrected himself,—when he wrote, "It is a misfortune for fine writers to be born in a period so enlightened as ours. The harvest of wit is gathered in, and little left to glean."¹

It is certainly to his credit that he did not imitate Johnson. There are scattered remarks about his Essays which look very like formal rebukes to Johnson's mannerisms; as, for instance, at the close of his "View of Learning," he speaks of the inflated style that was looked upon as fine writing, the loaded epithet, and trifles dressed with dignity. It is only the original of what he translated in another form, when he said that Johnson "made his little fishes talk like whales;" or—an expression not quite so familiar, but equally felicitous—characterized him as a man for ever hunting after lofty words to deliver mean ideas, "for ever gaping, when he only means to deliver a whisper." Had Johnson had the "Natural History" to write, there is no doubt he would have made it a work of philosophy. Even Buffon could not refrain from making

¹ This remark occurs in the first edition of the "View of Learning," and only in the first.

the Dove an opportunity of inserting his theory of love, and the article Hare an opportunity for a dissertation on the dispersion of nations. Johnson was, in fact, an admirable æsthetic critic, a genuine moralist. He viewed everything through an ethical lens. His turn of mind eminently adapted him for an essayist. Here he was in his element. When he leaves it for the realms of imagination, he is in an atmosphere that does not belong to him ; he flounders about in gigantic imbecility. His "Irene" is a good specimen of his awkwardness ; his "Rasselas," perhaps, is even a better. Of plot there is none. But the deficiency in dramatic contrivance is the least evil. Reason usurps the place of sentiment, and sentiment of sensibility. There is logic where there should have been rhetoric, and rhetoric where there should have been feeling. The incongruity of the vehicle might not have been unintentional, but it could easily have been avoided. And if Dryden deserved ridicule for making his "Hind and Panther" talk like parsons, that caprice was scarcely less excusable which made a young Eastern novice talk like a philosopher. It was the old Aristophanean proverb over again of the ass carrying the mysteries.

I have left but little room to speak of Goldsmith's merits as a comedian. As a comedian, indeed, he may soon be dismissed. He has nothing in common with the dramatists of the Restoration, neither the wit nor the obscenity of Wycherley or Congreve. If he resembles either, it is Farquhar, or more closely Vanbrugh, and that only in the delineation of such characters as depend for their development on an excess of animal spirits, his Tony Lumpkin for example. His cotemporaries decided on his merits when they hesitated between himself and Kelly.

I must now bring the review of Goldsmith's character

and writings to a close. I should be sorry in my dissection of him to have offended any old prejudices in his favour, to be regarded as depreciating him myself, or stimulating others to think worse of him than they did. I am as much disposed as any one to turn the wrong end of the telescope on his failings. But to be identifying the name of Goldsmith with the cause of virtue and philanthropy, is rather too unreasonable to be countenanced. It is to associate "Hudibras" with the "Paradise Lost." I would think of him as an infirm man of genius, beset by the vices of a precarious profession, neither so childish as to be devoid of moral responsibility, as some would have him, nor so callous as to be insensible to his moral delinquencies; as he, in fact, would have thought of himself when, reposing in the parlour of the Boar's Head Tavern, half drowsy with punch, he lay dreaming of Shakspeare, Falstaff, and the merry crew of Eastcheap, or when, half distracted with headache and remorse, he rushed from the room in the Temple, so emblematic in its confusion, strewn with papers, half-torn books, violins, loose pieces of money, half-worn finery, and half-emptied bottles, to welcome the panting form of the indignant Johnson.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ANCIENT AND MODERN ORATORS.

Rise of Oratory.—Historical Oratory preceded by Historical Dialogue.—Herodotus as a Dialogist.—Hume.—Shakspeare.—Herodotus's Set Speeches.—His Character as a Historian.—Mr. Sewel, and the Author of the "Theosophy of English History."—Xenophon.—The "Anabasis" and the "Tales of the Crusaders."—The "Cyropædia."—Cyrus a Godfrey or Rinaldo.—Xenophon's Vanity.—His Oratory.—Thucydides.—His Utilitarianism.—His Description of Demoralization in Greece compared with Machiavelli's Account of Italy.—Thucydides contrasted with Tacitus and Sharon Turner.—His Oratory.—His Idea of History, and Fox's Objections anticipated.—His Speeches as Debates, as Authentic, probably, as Johnson's.—The Speeches of Latin Historians.—Tacitus.—Sallust.—Livy.—Cæsar.—The later Greek Historians.—Dionysius and Dion Cassius.—Modern Historical Composition Examined.—Rise of Oratory Proper.—State of Greece and of Rome in the most Flourishing Period of Oratory.—Decline of Ancient Oratory.—Cicero.—Tacitus.—Augustus.—Suetonius.—The Greek Rhetoricians.—Quintilian.—The System of National Education adapted to turn out an Orator.—Rise of Professional or Forensic Orators.—Demosthenes and Cicero were the Swift and Junius of their Generation.—The Artifices of Oratory.—Bubb Dodington.—Grattan.—Cicero.—Quintilian.—The "Institutes" Examined.—The Artistic Devotion of Ancient Audiences.—The Areopagus and the Forum contrasted with the Old Bailey and Westminster Hall.—Cicero's Character Animadverted on.—Demosthenes.—Hume's Criticism Examined.—Rise of Modern Oratory.—Its Development in England at the Renaissance.—Bacon.—Ben Jonson's Criticism.—Oratory of the Rebellion.—Of the Revolution.—Bolingbroke's Oratory.—Reason of its Peculiar Vocal Characteristics.—Chesterfield's Receipt.—Contrast of the Present Parliamentary Oratory.—Oratory in Walpole's Time.—Growth of Artistic Oratory.—Chatham.—Compared with Mirabeau.—Parliamentary Oratory now Uninfluential.—Pitt.—Fox.—Fox and Demosthenes Compared.—Lord Brougham.—Burke, a Psychological Study.—Criticism on Oratory scant.—Aristotle.—Dionysius.—Longinus.—Quintilian.—Cicero.—Merits of Modern Dialogists.

THE eloquence of nature precedes the eloquence of art, as language precedes grammar. But the distinction in time and the distinction in essence are by no means proportional. Art converts into rules the accidents of nature.

The untaught speaker seems therefore to anticipate the teachings of art. Without artifice he unwittingly employs all the machinery that art alone is supposed to supply. He speaks in tropes. Every period contains a figure. Every sentence is a metaphor. His language is eminently ornamental. Nor is it for mere ornament's sake. His ornaments are in fact his arguments. The bow of Herodotus's Ethiopian and the fagot of Mr. Erskine's Indian expressed at once rare imagery and sound logic. They were at once highly figurative and highly diplomatic. Thus it is with the early history of nations as it is with their early poetry. It is richly symbolistic. It substitutes imagination for reason, or rather, it contrives a complete fusion of imagination with reason. Physical objects are made to express metaphysical ideas. The diction becomes poetic. All the beauties and all the defects of civilized oratory are anticipated. The conception sometimes suffers for the language. The language sometimes exalts the conception. There is no well-regulated consistency. The mean jostles the magnificent. The familiar elbows the sublime. And in the same breath is produced the splendid imagery of Burke, and the vulgarity of Mr. Spurgeon. Such appear to be the characteristics of uneducated oratory.

As oratory proper does not form a branch of literature till after the development of history, it is clear that, next to the poets, specimens of oratory must be looked for in the historians. At first sight it should seem that these specimens are likely to be too scanty for a test. The requirements necessary for the preservation of oratory are not few. Truthfulness in the narrative capacity, or skill in the imitative faculty, are among the most prominent. To give the real sentiments of the speaker with fidelity, or to make the fictitious as much like the supposed model of the real as possible, is what the historian

is called upon to do. Unfortunately, to fulfil the first exigency, is almost always, in an infantine society, out of his power. If he had the inclination to be accurate, in all but contemporary history, the materials are wanting to him on which his accuracy might occupy itself. All that he can do, therefore, is to invent and originate. And to exercise his oratorical invention, numberless circumstances tempt him. His very failure in material contributes to his success. His imagination is under no dread of documentary restraint. Historical records are scant. Historical composition is still more limited. Technical rules are few. Caprice has not yet been converted into a science. History, not yet developed into an art, is still a taste. His only examples are the poets, and the poets are all in his favour. There is no investigation of cause and effect, because there has been no previous registration, by which to guide investigation. The historian is but the reporter of facts. He rehearses; he tells therefore what he heard, and as he heard it. He has gathered his materials by his own personal observation. He has collected them orally. He has in addition to this to deliver them orally. He has therefore to amuse as well as to instruct. Possessed of keen sensibility himself, he has to address an audience as sensitive as children. To enforce realization, there is but one way. He becomes dramatic. He speaks for his characters. He makes his characters speak for themselves. In the heat of personation he has recourse to the simplest form of oratory, dialogue; and in an instant he is Croesus discussing the philosophy of happiness with Solon, or Cambyses mocking the priests of the Egyptian Apis. The Greek historians, says Quintilian, assume a licence almost equal to that of poets. The reason is plain. Early history had at least assumed a poetic form. The privilege of mixing the ideal with the real, originally accorded to

the poet, was continued to the primitive historian. Herodotus's work is thus a transition from the epic to history. The "Odyssey" and the "Clio" contain very much of the marvellous in common.

Herodotus, as he is the first of historians, so he is, in point of excellence as in point of time, the first of historical dialogists. Colloquy was not suited to the style of Thucydides, and he has therefore avoided it. Xenophon was every whit as fond of gossip as Herodotus. Nor indeed does the gossip of Xenophon strike our ear with such inconsistency as that of Herodotus. Xenophon's work is a personal memoir, not a history. Dialogue in such a work can hardly be open to the same objections as dialogue in a history. We enjoy in Walpole what we should turn from with disgust in Smollett. The author is part of his narrative. His own eyes have witnessed the adventures he relates. His own ears have listened to the conversation he details. The credibility and the interest of these details are increased in proportion to the probability of their genuineness. We at once conclude that it is more likely that Xenophon should have known what Cyrus said to Clearchus, or what passed between Clearchus and Ariæus, than that Herodotus should have overheard the intercourse of Harpagus with the herdsman Mithridates. In manner, Xenophon does not yield to Herodotus as a scientific dialogist. But in some instances, especially in his fictitious dialogue, he is not so happy in the subject-matter. The dialogue between the child Cyrus and his grandfather Astyages, in the first book of the "Cyropædia," is to my mind singularly misplaced. The style is simple enough, and, with a trifling exception, is exactly the style which a child would use, if a child could talk with such precocity. But the truth is, he is no longer a child. He is a monstrous phenomenon, a lisping philosopher in petticoats. The same objection

will apply to another, and the most pretentious dialogue in the "*Cyropædia*," that between Cyrus and Tigranes in the third book. The absurdity of making a half-tamed Armenian prince discuss the nature of fear and discretion in the Socratic manner with his father's conqueror, and at the moment of his father's arrest, is at once evident. But the whole dialogue might have been heard by Xenophon any time at the Agora, or among the gymnasia. It is easy to trace the origin of that skill with which the Persian prince leads his victim to convict himself step by step, and finally to pronounce his own doom. Put Socrates for Cyrus, Hippias or Aristippus for Tigranes, and the whole piece might read as an extract from the "*Memorabilia*."

In Herodotus the colloquy is generally singularly characteristic, and to the purpose. No part of the dialogue is foreign to the text. It is never out of place, and, instead of fitting clumsily into the narrative, it really forms an integral portion of it. No one can become thoroughly familiar with its simplicity of style without being forcibly reminded of the colloquial manner of the Old Testament.

It is evident that little reliance has been placed upon the creation of effect. There is no attempt at attitudinizing, or at that worst and most popular trick of modern dialogists, expression-painting. We know that Cræsus is in an agony of grief, but nothing is said of the sobs and the tears. We are told that Cambyzes rages like a madman, but we never see him knitting the brow or gnashing the teeth. The chief defect is, perhaps, a tendency in the characters to be sententious, to utter short oracular *γνώμαι*, in the style of Sir Piercie Shafton. It is of course natural that such unfortunates as Cræsus and Demaratus should take every opportunity for aphorizing on the instability of human greatness. But it is

not only the privilege of the wretched. The king on his throne moralizes. The ambassadors at the Council Board moralize. Generals moralize on the battle-field; and even the Amazon Artemisia cannot direct her triremes without a quirk that would have better suited an Aspasia. The fondness of Herodotus for dialogue has, among modern critics especially, affected his reputation as a historian. As far as its manner may distinguish it, his history may be allowed to bear the same relation to that of Thucydides, for example, as the history of Walpole bears to that of Hume. In Walpole's work the self-delineation of character is made to predominate. We are introduced behind the scenes. We are led into the company of the personages. The king and his ministers are as familiar to us as those of our own household. Every whisper reaches us. We witness every emotion in the closet, and every gesture at the council board. In Herodotus the development of the individuality is carried out on the same principle. We are at once transported into the courts of Susa and Ecbatana. There is none of the stately ceremoniousness of history to interfere with our curiosity. We hear every man address us in his own tongue. His own lips tell us the misfortunes of Cræsus. His own lips betray to us the secret motives of Cyrus or Darius. Xerxes as he is drawn by Herodotus, and as he is drawn by Diodorus Siculus, exactly describes the difference between the Henry IV. of Shakspeare, and the Henry IV. of Hume. In the latter case we have a dry catalogue of actions and qualities; in the former there is nothing less than a dramatic representation.

As history progresses, and the materials of history accumulate, the style of historical composition assumes a severer cast. Colloquialisms are avoided. Private conversation is suppressed, or assumes an oblique form, scarcely distinguishable from the narrative. But, while

the imitation of private conversation is no longer an item in the art, the imitation of public speaking becomes proportionally prominent. Thus history, ceasing to be dramatic, becomes oratorical. As the object of history is truth, and all mere imitation is fiction, the benefit derived from this change can only indeed be comparative. The skill of the artist may assist the imposition, but it is still an imposition. The speech of Richard III. in Shakespeare, on accepting the crown, resembles the speech of Cromwell under similar circumstances, in a very marked degree, and is perhaps the most characteristic speech that fiction ever put into the mouth of a character. But the one is authentic. The other is not. In spite of its verisimilitude, therefore, we take the one and leave the other. On the other hand, verisimilitude is the test by which such imitations must finally be tried. If the subject-matter of the oratory be fictitious, the style of the oratory should at least be consistent. The historian who should choose to avail himself of a rhetorical exposition of his views, incurs a responsibility while he reaps an advantage. He adds the duties of the artist to those of the narrator. And while he is fulfilling the purposes of the historian, he has to pay obeisance to the exigencies of the dramatist. The difficulties of the task are increased twofold. It is no wonder, therefore, upon examination, almost every historian who has braved them, has finally succumbed to them.

Set speeches in Herodotus are, considering the extent of his work and his opportunities for introducing them, comparatively rare. It is evident that his familiar pen has no sympathy with the formalities of oratory. One of the very few attempts he has made at deliberative oratory is not in his favour, the harangue in the third book, where the several Persians discuss the merits of forms of government, of which their own experience could have

afforded them no criterion. The inconsistency did not escape the critics of his own day. And, indeed, it seems to me clear that Herodotus was fully conscious of the apparent anomaly by his retrospective attempt in the sixth book¹ to justify it. In some of the other speeches, while the style is rhetorically excellent, the matter at once betrays their origin. The episode in the speech of Mardonius before Xerxes, reflecting on the mutual divisions of the Grecian States, is evidently the sentiment of the Grecian author who had seen and suffered by those divisions.* The political principles of the writer appear again in the frequent national enunciation of republican ideas. If it was an anomaly that a few Persian princes should hold a philosophical disquisition on the comparative merits of a monarchy, a democracy, and an oligarchy, it was certainly a still greater anomaly that a Samian tyrant should denounce the claims of tyranny, and proclaim the advantages of universal equality.² The most characteristic harangues—for they can scarcely be called speeches—are those put into the lips of Xerxes. Every expression is that of a man whose word is law. The authoritative demeanour with which he expresses his resolutions, while he affects to ask advice, is precisely the manner of the Persian despot, who levels mountains, chastises the ocean, and falls into a passion with the gods.

On the whole, the great charm by which the history of Herodotus has endeared itself to the hearts of a thousand generations is the impress that it bears of the personal character of its author. Of that character fairer opportunities of test and judgment have produced fairer conceptions. Instead of the simple credulous traveller, whose art has been mistaken for artlessness—who, in spite of his own repudiation, has been made to believe in marvels which he diplomatically detailed for the gratifi-

¹ Ch. 43.² Bk. vii. c. 9.³ Bk. iii. 142.

cation of an audience to whom the marvellous was always grateful—instead of the adventurer who wanted to pass off for facts of natural history tales about bald men, and goat-footed men, men without eyes, and men without names,—we have the scientific naturalist and careful explorer. In truth, few inquirers have undergone such difficulties or taken such pains to verify their inquiries. The portrait of Oldbuck of Monkbarns is no exaggerated representation of the spirit of antiquarianism that burned in him. The laborious diligence with which he followed up the slightest clue to the solution of a problem, is still a pattern for archæologists. Could the registrar at Sais give him no information about the sources of the Nile, in a few days he was making his way to Elephantine, and carrying on his explorations in defiance of crocodiles and Ethiopian nomades. Was he at fault in the identification of the Grecian and Egyptian Herculese, he is soon heard of at the Phœnician Tyre, pursuing the clue to Pharos, conversing with the priests of the temple, and noting down the offerings between the pillars of gold and emerald.¹ It is interesting to watch how the spirit of religion co-operated with the spirit of the antiquarian. But while it stimulated his researches, there is no doubt it interfered with their results. While the same curiosity is expressed towards sacred and secular objects, the difference in his treatment of them is marked. Thus he can afford to laugh at the accounts of ants larger and swifter than camels, of asses that never drink, and sheep with tails a foot and a half broad. But the moment the sacred birds, the phoenix, the serpent with wings, the coal-black ibis, come before his notice, his whole demeanour changes. He hastens through the deserts of Arabia to verify their bones, but no irreverent incredulity escapes him in the description of them. It is evident

¹ Bk. ii. c. 44.

that he reports on them with the same scrupulous restraint that he reports on the authenticity or veracity of oracles. If he disbelieves, he dares not deny. If he has any doubts, he dares not express them.¹ That Herodotus was a religious man is certain: the very opposite to his cotemporary Thucydides. Wonder, and veneration the more emphatic expression of wonder, which was wanting in the latter, was signally developed in him. His veneration was, in truth, almost cosmopolitan. Each fresh mystery, each new rite, each novel god, exacted his homage, the African Ammon and the Babylonian Belus, the bull Apis, and the dwarf Phthah. The stress which he lays on the doctrine of special Providence, illustrated by the numberless examples of divine interposition which he details, is a kindred feature, and traceable to the same cause. Every action has its accompanying dream, every event is made dependent on some previous prognostication, whose operation is equally sure, whether it be the voice of an oracle or the dropping of a phthisical tyrant's tooth. This taste for supernatural explanation is doubtless singular in a man who possessed scientific sagacity, and who might have conversed with Pericles, and listened to the raillery of the author of the "Clouds." But it is no uncommon thing to find a man living in a highly-developed state of society recur for some of his opinions to its infancy. In our own day we have seen a Cambridge divine writing a book which nobody has read but to laugh at, called the "Theosophy of English History," as full of mystical interpretations as an Alexandrian rhapsodist could have made it, and an Oxford divine propounding a system of "Christian Politics" that would have been thought preposterous by an apostle.

Not a little of my criticism on Herodotus might be transferred to Xenophon. In character, the two authors

¹ Bk. viii. c. 77.

present striking features of resemblance. Both were religious animals. Both were fond of adventure and traveling. Both were gifted with a singular facility of communicating their travels, though in investigation and in detail Xenophon is far more superficial than Herodotus. Judging the two authors by the only test left to judge them by, their works, Xenophon is undoubtedly the least attractive character of the two. The "Anabasis" is an egotistic romance. It is all Xenophon. It bears about the same relation to history that Scott's "Tales of the Crusaders" do to the Chronicles. There are features in both, indeed, not wanting in analogy. Xenophon is Cœur de Lion. The Greeks are to the Persians what the Christians are to the Saracens. A handful of Greeks assault myriads of Persians. The Greeks are always successful. The Persians are always the victims. The Persians are always perfidious. The Greeks are patterns of honourable warfare. Xenophon is the mainstay of the expedition. He is invincible in stratagem and tactics. In the camp he associates with the warriors, shares their danger, and soothes their apprehensions by all the arts of precept and example. At the council board his eloquence carries the day. When differences of opinion arise, he is always at hand to temper the debate, and give advice, and his advice is always successful. And to complete the parallel, he is always the victim of calumny and misrepresentation at the hands of the very men whom his advice has preserved. Xenophon himself, too, had all the religious superstition of a Crusader. Theologically speaking, he is the perfect type of the uneducated Greek. He never moves without sacrificing. The augurs are his ministers. He permits the army to starve rather than proceed against the victims. The soothsayer Silanus makes as great a figure in his camp as the hermit of Engaddi does in the camp of the Chris-

tians. A sneeze, or the flight of an eagle, was to him what a dream or a meteorological phantasm was to them.

In reading the "Cyropædia" it is difficult to divest oneself of the impression that it is a parabolic representation of the author of the "Anabasis." Independently of certain analogous circumstances in the plots of each, Xenophon undoubtedly holds the position in the one which Cyrus holds in the other. Cyrus is one of those insufferable heroes, courageous, handsome, gallant, and wise, in a word, possessed of that superhuman combination of virtues which mediæval romancers sometimes embodied in their Godfreys and Rinaldos, and which modern novelists at present embody in their curates. He is pious, of course, or Xenophon would have had none of him. Indeed, the assiduity with which he offers up libations at all kinds of inconvenient moments, sings hymns and poems before going to battle, and chooses a sacred watchword, reminds me very strongly of those warlike saints of another era, who went to meet the foe with the praises of God in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hands, the heroes of Marston and Edgehill. He is generous beyond conception, wins battles only to gratify the man who envied him, takes thousands of prisoners only to release them, and mountains of plunder only to refund his share of it. In the field he is sure to be victorious. In debate, it is with him as it was with Shaftesbury, as though one inquired of an oracle. The combination of prowess and sagacity is so marvellous that, literally speaking, neither history nor fiction supply his parallel, unless it may be some of those wonderful compounds of wit and muscle that Dryden in his most extravagant moments created for his heroic tragedies. Prosperity does not elate him. Adversity does not oppress him. His ingenuity conducts to the one, and triumphs over the other. Every one adores

him. His enemies feel it a privilege to become his friends. His friends close the tie by claiming relationship to him. Something after the pattern of this, his perfect model, does Xenophon strive to paint himself in the "Anabasis." There is, in addition, a disagreeable tone of assumption in his autobiography, which he has happily denied to his counterpart. Thus, not content with praising himself, he makes others praise him ; nay, he makes others, in the midst of abusing him, praise him. This is the case with Sauthe, and if some readings of the passage be correct, it is the case with Philanus. He takes evident satisfaction in dwelling on the difficulties that arise, and still more in showing that the Athenian called Xenophon was the very man to suggest the remedy. His fellow officers and colleagues in command are scarcely heard of, and his commanding officer, Cheirisopus, who is clearly a more distinguished man than he is painted, is never mentioned except in an unfavourable contrast.

This vanity or egotism would be less disgusting or irritating in a really strong and masculine mind, if such a mind could indulge in it. But no such mind had Xenophon. Most vain of mortals, he was the least opinionative. His opinions were tastes, his principles fancies. In politics he was the same latitudinarian that Herodotus was in religion. He trimmed his sails to every wind. He shifted with every tide. He changed his mind with every climate. On the Tigris he was a despot. At Sparta an aristocrat. At Athens a republican. Thrasybulus, Agesilaus, Cyrus, tyrannized over him one by one. Custom or the tone of political morality may excuse this cosmopolitanism, but nothing can excuse the unjust taunts with which he takes every opportunity of vilifying his maternal country Attica, and his unfair glorification of his adopted country Lace-

dæmon. In his expedition he is continually reminding his soldiers of the superiority of the Spartan over the Athenian, and wherever he can, he betrays a partiality so hot and unseemly for them, that a bystander can scarcely refrain from attributing it to a politic dread of them. With regard to Xenophon's literary merits, it can scarcely be said that he ever rose above the mere dilettante. The "*Cyropædia*" is a pleasingly told tale. Its chief value is the indication it affords of the hero-worshipping mind of the author. The Cyrus of the tale is no more like the real Cyrus than Fenelon's "*Telemachus*" is like the Dauphin, or Bolingbroke's patriot prince like the heir of George II. He probably was neither so bad, nor so pretentious. The minor works, the treatises on Hunting and Horsemanship, the "*Life of Agesilaus*," and the "*Memorabilia*," are good illustrations of the desultory and the obsequious habits of the writer; habits which, it must always be remembered with gratitude, prompted him to do for one of the sublimest minds of antiquity that service which Arrian paid to Epictetus, and which in modern times a still more obsequious devotee paid to Johnson.

On the contents of the "*Anabasis*" I have already expressed my opinion. In point of execution it probably holds the same place in Grecian literature that the work of Cæsar occupies in the historical literature of Rome, although in saying thus much no critic would for a moment think of predicating equal ability of the two productions. In lucidness and simplicity of style, the one has no advantage over the other, save to the modern reader the advantage of facility of interpretation which the Latin language affords. But for keenness of observation, and philosophical delineation of national character and customs, the Grecian will bear no comparison with the Roman. It is probably this uniform simplicity of manner and

diction that has led Quintilian to give Xenophon more credit than he deserves for the oratorical portions of his work. In the rhetorical execution of them there is little or no inconsistency, except the inconsistency unavoidable, and it should seem unreasonably censured, of making Persians utter their sentiments in terms of Greek rhetoric. As far as the matter of them is concerned, later criticism has exposed them to a more fundamental change. Free from the casuistry and misplaced subtlety of Thucydides, in the mechanical arrangements of his speeches he commits blunders that Thucydides would never have been guilty of. Thus he affects to relate speeches of his own hearing which, by his own showing, he could never have heard. Nay, he pretends to relate to an audience as novelties events which, by his own showing, that audience had taken a chief part in. In other respects there are some few inconsistencies which a more careful artist than Xenophon would not have overlooked. In the first book of the "Anabasis," for instance, Cyrus, in the act of grasping the despotic crown of Persia, is represented as depreciating his own future subjects as cowardly barbarians, and haranguing the Greeks for Greece and liberty. In the sixth book of the "Hellenics," again, he tells us that Autocles was a skilful orator. He then puts into his mouth scarce a dozen sentences, and those sentences but little to the purpose ; while Callias, the torch-bearer, speaks more, and far more rhetorically. The celebrated dying oration of Cyrus to his son, considered as a rhetorical display, is undoubtedly one of the finest things of the kind in antiquity. Like the dialogue already alluded to, it would not have misbecome the lips of Socrates. But for this very reason it is singularly out of place in the lips of the aged Persian despot.

Coming between Herodotus and Xenophon in point

of time, but in every other respect far in advance of both, is Thucydides. No ancient mind displayed, to use a Baconian expression, less moisture in its composition. His character shines in a dry light. Religiously speaking, there is a tone of half-concealed scepticism running through his work which reminds us of Voltaire in his soberest moments, or more vividly of Montaigne. From the simple credulity of his predecessor Herodotus, he is as entirely free as from the senile theophilanthropy of his successor Xenophon. He was, in the strictest sense of the term, a utilitarian. The immediate value of a human action was his standard of right. Its physical and moral significance he treated at par. Its practical consequences, not its ethical elements, are what he most dwells upon. Man in his political, not in his moral nature, is clearly the main object of his study. Abstract virtue and disinterestedness he leaves for philosophers to dream about. His own test is the vulgar disposition of his fellow-men such as he found them, not in the Utopia of the Lyceum or Stoa, but on the battle-field and in the senate-house. It is not easy to divest oneself of the idea that the tenor of the expressions which he put into the mouth of the Athenian ambassadors in the first book is intended to represent his own philosophy of human nature, and human motives, when he makes them vindicate their character in triumph, on the strength of their having done nothing contradictory to the ordinary disposition of man, under the ordinary incitements of "honour, fear, and profit." However this may be, it may justly be imputed to him that an unamiable, sophisticated estimate interpenetrates all his composition, narrative as well as rhetorical. The speeches of his suppliants are the least supplicatory in style and manner to be met with in any author. There is no appeal to the feelings, or the sympathies, none of the eloquent

rhetoric of suffering and despair applying to the memory of past associations for aid. On the contrary, the style is hard and dry as a problem of Euclid. Its argumentative craftiness testifies that it is not friendship but logic that it relies on, that the suppliant depends on demonstrating not the justice of his own claims to be succoured, but the interest of the supplicated to succour him. Anything like the influence of compassion is silently and mutually eschewed. The speech of Cleon, again, against clemency may have laid the foundation of Macchiavelli's chapter on the comparative advantages of cruelty and mercy. In his judgment of character this cold, anæsthetic temperament displays itself perhaps more prominently still. Success is apparently his test of ability. Not the object, but the attainment of the object, is what he looks to. He clearly despises Pausanias, for example, for his want of self-control to conceal his purpose, though that purpose involved the ruin of his country. Themistocles, on the other hand, whose treachery was more successful, he is in raptures with, calls him a great natural genius, worthy of admiration from all men, of the greatest foresight, the best judge of the present, the best conjecturer of the future. Alcibiades, whose double villany he deliberately relates, he as deliberately passes over without a word of moral comment. Nicias, on the other hand, whose scrupulous piety lost him the finest fleet that ever left the Piræus, he treats with a contempt more bitter than the raillery of Aristophanes.

This deficiency in ethical discrimination naturally depreciates the historian's character in the estimation of a modern reader. But it may be suggested that Thucydides simply shared in the defects of his age. The characteristics of that age he himself paints, as only he could paint, in a chapter which, though often overlooked by philological critics, contains the finest specimens of analytical

characterization in the writings of antiquity, not even excepting Tacitus.¹ I have mentioned the name of Macchiavelli. I can only say that a similar fundamental controversion in ethics seems to have taken place in Greece to that which took place in Italy in Macchiavelli's time. All the ties of honour and morality—all those ties, in fact, which are the uncostly pledges between citizen and citizen, the cheap sureties of mutual security—were utterly disregarded. Mutual distrust begetting mutual treachery, and in turn begotten by it; ambition daring by every *secret* means to get the superiority; animosity that betrayed itself only at the moment that it was satiated—such, says the historian, was the prevailing disposition. There was no lack of intellectual refinement, but it was exhibited only in the eminent cunning of its devices and the monstrous cruelty of its vengeance. The successful plotter was thought clever, the successful counter-plotter still cleverer. Oaths were but the masks for treachery, and he that contrived to put his enemy off his guard wreaked his vengeance on him all the more sweetly for his confidence, taking into account the safety of the plan and the prize he aimed at for cleverness. The portraiture suggested by the next paragraph, if possible, still more vividly recalls the era of the "Prince." The majority, when honest, more easily acquired the name of talented, than, when simple, that of good. Piety, indeed, was in fashion with none; but those who had the luck to carry out their villany under fair pretences were the most highly spoken of. Simplicity, which is so large an ingredient in a noble nature, was laughed out of being.

Such a state of political and social demoralization had Thucydides witnessed. He had witnessed, too, all the practical effects produced by it. Those who pass

¹ Bk. iii. 82.

their lives amid the hardening scenes of a moral revolution, rarely escape the infection. Their moral nature, at first shocked, afterwards acquiesces in circumstances over which they have no control. Familiarity with vice in its most horrible forms blunts their enthusiasm for the delicate phases of virtue. They have so long smelt the smell of blood, that they forget to sicken at it. They have so long seen the enormities of faction go unchastised, that they forget to chastise them. Hence the indifference with which Thucydides speaks of assassinations and massacres, more horrible than any assassinations; the total absence of virtuous horror, of the *sava indignatio* of the moralist or the satirist, as he details the alternate fates of Coreyreans, Helots, and Scionians. In one respect this indifference to moralizing has not been without its service to him. The narrative flows on with uninterrupted simplicity, and the reader is spared those tedious episodes which disfigure the pages of a certain class of historians, easier specified than described, of whom Polybius in ancient history, and Sharon Turner in modern, may be considered the representatives. For it is a general rule that writers who combine the offices of moralist and historian succeed well in neither, and acquire an air of insipidity in both; just as a soil which will produce grapes as well as corn will probably produce neither in perfection. We object to the fierce moral denunciation peculiar to this class of writers, for the same reason that a Chinaman objects to the shading of a European painting; there are too many black spots in it.

It is probably this impassiveness which explains what critics are so fond of complaining of, the want of ethic portraiture. In this respect Thucydides presents a signal contrast to Tacitus. The Roman historian is as minute as a Dutch painter in his moral delineation. He analyzes his characters with laborious punctiliousness, and

dwells on each particular feature with the painstaking curiosity of an anatomist. Such is his method of treating Augustus, Tiberius, Germanicus, and all his chief personages. The Grecian writer is elliptical in this as in everything else. He paints, as it were, by inference. He represents actions, and he leaves his reader to infer qualities. He gives outlines, and he expects the spectator to supply the filling up. And this he does with such consummate skill and consistency, that a single stroke of his pencil conveys all the impressions of the most elaborate brush. That Alcibiades loved dogs and horses, and was held in high repute by the citizens, is all the positive colouring bestowed on his character. Yet no one can doubt, on arising from the narrative that includes his life, that he has as good a conception of him as he has of the Earl of Essex or the Earl of Shaftesbury. All we are told of the General Nicias is that he was rather given to the observance of rites and oracles. Yet the whole disposition of Nicias becomes in the end as familiar to us as that of Prince Eugene. Like that ancient painter in Pliny, who, unable to trust the eloquence of his art, drew a veil over the face which he dared not depict, Thucydides gives us posture, circumstance, locality, everything but expression. In this he is the most impartial of historians. A fair allotment of prominence is assigned to each character. No one is left in the background by neglect. This is more striking when we turn from him to those modern historians, of the last century especially, who in the distribution of their attention seem to have copied those pre-Raphaelite painters of martyrdoms, who only introduced the assistants to fill up the space in the canvas, left empty by the saint and his executioner.

There is no doubt that the frequent introduction of speeches contributes very materially to the development of

character, and in some degree may be allowed to compensate for the absence of special characterization. And this, indeed, in skilful hands, is one of the usages of rhetorical execution. The character is allowed to portray itself. We catch the manners of the man living as they arise from his own lips. Each new sentiment is a key. Every word is an index. And, however artificial in point of style, the speeches of Thucydides are admirably characteristic in point of matter. Cleon is always insolently sanguine. Brasidas is always generously confident. Nicias is always conscientious and prudent. Alcibiades is always precipitate and specious. Alcibiades' address to the Spartans, indeed, in the sixth book, is so admirable an exposure of his own character, that I can never believe that he made it. Thucydides, on the other hand, undoubtedly indulges his neglect of ethical portraiture to a culpable extent. The curt and abrupt manner in which he has dismissed Pericles from the scene has always been registered against him. And the omission is recorded with greater emphasis, that with the name and title of Pericles to fame was associated the foundation of all that mental and artistic supremacy which, through good repute and through ill repute, has clung for more than twenty generations to the name of Athens. From all that Thucydides has said of the matter, no one could infer that he lived and wrote in a city renowned as the nurse of every art and every science, at a time when he might have witnessed a tragical contest between Æschylus and Sophocles, or have left Socrates lecturing against the Sophists in the marketplace, to linger with Phidias among the friezes and statues of the Parthenon. This suppression, while it illustrates the dry idiosyncrasies of the historian, illustrates at the same time the condition of history. And while we wonder at him, it would be unjust to forget

that, even within our own memory, laws of historical composition have been laid down quite as exclusive and quite as confined. It is not at all impossible that Thucydides might have been influenced in his creation of an historical model by considerations similar to those which guided the estimate of Fox, and that he too might have thought a critical digression in favour of literature and art an unseemly interruption to the office of history, "which ceases to be history when it ceases to be narrative."

I speak advisedly when I say that my judgment of Thucydides' character will not find favour among a certain class of readers. When Warburton undertook to edit "Shakspeare," Quin, the player, sent him a message that he had better stick to his own Bible, and let theirs alone. To a not very limited set of minds Thucydides stands in much the same light as Shakspeare did to Quin. They regard him psychologically as they regard him etymologically; their fondness for him is proportioned to his profundity. With him, too, are associated the early triumphs of the school days, and the manlier triumphs of a more laborious scholarship. There is an odium scholasticum as well as an odium theologicum. With this atrabilious advocacy of their favourite author, a not very definite notion of classic history co-operates. In spite of Mr. Grote, they still continue to speak of Grecian men and Grecian institutions as they would speak of men and institutions that had no share in their common humanity—as they speak of the Strulbugs and the academies of Laputa. They have no idea of a civilization distinct from their own, with its appropriate complex political and moral machinery. They look upon the characters who figure in it as demons or demigods, personified vices or personified virtues. Thucydides was evidently a man of superior sagacity, of a long reach of political vision, of a cool judicial penetration. But

Thucydides was a Greek, nevertheless; a fellow-countryman of the men who identified national honour with national interest, whose custom it was to murder the generals they captured, to prevent their doing further mischief. There can be no injustice in attributing to such a Greek motives that can be justly attributed to Dr. Paley. But these persons know Thucydides chiefly for his concise, condensed, and nervous Attic; and they think it a pity that a man who wrote so purely and so well, should be allowed a standard of morality not superior to an English archdeacon's. They are shocked that so much unimpassioned logic should conceal an Eudæmonism as gross as Jeremy Bentham's. They cannot endure that we should suspect an historian who is so little of the satirist and so little of the panegyrist.

The fact is, Thucydides is an author to be studied, not read. You may read his work, as most people do, for his Greek, but you must dissect it for his character. His is just the style, an impartial, deliberative, what Dryden, speaking of his own didactic poem, called, "a legislative style," to impose upon the casual reader. He paints so elliptically, he allows so little of his personality to appear, he keeps himself so habitually in the background, he hints so much more than he speaks out, that the spectator yields almost without resistance to such oracular attraction. It is necessary to rid yourself of first impressions before you can hope to be disenchanted. It is only then that you discover in the author a man singularly jealous of the interference of mere habit and prejudice, almost cynically distrustful of the influence of the feelings over the rational faculty, ironically tolerant of moral violations, and almost sarcastically justificatory of the claims of self-interest. I am not judging Thucydides from the speeches of the historian. Dramatic consistency required him to condemn his villains out of

their own mouth. It would be just as unfair to conclude that he was a friend to treachery, because Alcibiades justifies his incivism, or to murder, because Cleon advocates the slaughter of the Mityleneans, as to agree with those wise commentators who maintained that Shakspeare was a Roman Catholic, because the Ghost in "Hamlet" describes the Roman Catholic state of purgatory. Nor am I depreciating Thucydides below the common standard of his age. What I urge is, that that standard was a low one, and that Thucydides fully came up to it.

With regard to the speeches of Thucydides, they are still more palpably counterfeit than those of Herodotus or Xenophon. It did not need his acknowledgment to discover their fictitiousness. However varied in general matters, they all reflect that common mannerism which is an infallible sign of a common origin. As debates, they are much less authentic than Johnson's parliamentary reports, and are quite as idiomatic. The dense, close-knit, epigrammatic texture of Thucydides' style is, of all styles, least fitted for oratory. It is especially unfitted for attributed oratory. The want of characteristic discrimination is at once more forcibly realized, and as we listen to the infant lisping in the same unwearied enthymem as the wise and high-minded statesman, the incongruity strikes us as it struck the ingenious Queen of Brobdignag, while enraptured by the eloquence of Captain Lemuel Gulliver, and we cannot help sharing her surprise that so much wit should exist in so diminutive a form. The Bœotian uses all the casuistry of the Sicilian. The laconic Spartan indulges in the volubility of the Corinthian, while Bœotian, Spartan, and Corinthian speakers employ the Atticisms of the Athenian writer. Certain portions of some of the speeches are evidently mere rhetorical expositions of the

views of the author. The speech of Athenagoras containing a comparative estimate of oligarchy and democracy, and the speech of the Corinthian ambassador containing a comparative estimate of Athenians and Lacedæmonians, seem to me to betray the terse analytical skill of Thucydides, when Thucydides chose to be analytical. The mixture of invention and truth in the speeches has an unpleasant effect. We cannot believe that the spirit is there, and the letter only different. The judgment can make no compromise. It involuntarily refuses its assent to a composition which, by its own claims, is not fiction; yet which by its own acknowledgment is not history. Our interest is divided. We vacillate in alternate uncertainty between what is authentic and what is ideal. Finally, we end by regarding them with some such analogous feeling as we look upon some of De Foe's historical novels, for instance, "The Cavalier," or "Captain Carleton." We are sure that the mere external expression is false, we are not sure that the substance is true.

When we come to the speeches of Latin historians, other considerations present themselves. We lose the test of dialect. Except in cases of very marked style, we lose in some degree the test of style. Both Sallust and Tacitus possess this style. We are therefore enabled to convict them out of their own mouth. Sallust, from his propinquity to the times of which he wrote, may lay a more emphatic claim to genuineness in the matter of his speeches. But the composition there is no mistaking. The speech attributed to Cæsar on the punishment of the conspirators, doubtless contains the very arguments of Cæsar as he used them before the senate. But a schoolboy can discern the contrast in the fictitious and the acknowledged style of Cæsar. He does not indeed assimilate himself in any way to the character

of the speaker whom he personates. Marius, whom he describes as unlearned, and a despiser of the Greek arts, uses all the terse and epigrammatic rhetoric of Memmius, whom he represents to be a great and powerful orator. Sallust was an imitator of Thucydides. Tacitus was a more devoted imitator of Sallust. He is even yet more elliptical and disjointed in his style than either. His style indeed is to that of Thucydides what shorthand is to ordinary writing. Thucydides is obscure by construction. Tacitus is obscure by positive suppression. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that, in rhetorical aptitude, the same deficiencies are observable in the several writers. Like Sallust, he fails in characteristic assimilation. He condemns Claudius, for example, as a man of feeble understanding, yet he makes Claudius indulge in the brief, compact, and nervous phraseology of Augustus. In the same pointed, vigorous, and idiomatic phraseology women supplicate, emperors storm, generals address their soldiers, the Pannonian legions address their generals. Livy's style is rather less idiomatic. Consequently, his rhetorical discrepancies are to the casual reader less striking. Hence, though the speeches which Livy has given to Scipio and Hannibal are quite as fictitious as any which Shakspeare has given to Henry the Fifth or Charles the Sixth, and though it is far more likely that Cæsar should have used the sentiments of Sallust, than Scipio or Hannibal have used those of Livy, it is almost as likely that Scipio should have spoken in the manner of Livy, as that Cæsar should have spoken in the manner of Sallust.

The Greek historians of Latin subjects are still further beyond the reach of criticism. The better their composition, the more skilful their rhetoric, the less impalpable becomes the imposition. Dionysius, for example, was a master of rhetoric, and some of his

speeches are framed with laborious skill, after the manner of Demosthenes. The result is, the conviction that they were spoken by those by whom the author would represent them as being spoken, does not for one moment linger on the mind of the least sagacious reader. A deficiency of skill, on the other hand, is equally fatal. Thus, if we had not Cæsar's own curt and military address, before the fight with Ariovistus, we should never be imposed on by the eight pages, folio, of oratory which Dion Cassius puts into his mouth.

The historical composition of modern times, when contrasted with that of antiquity, presents a singular exemption from the licences of fiction. In this department of literature, at least, we yield to no age. Indeed, the superiority of the moderns over the ancients, in this item, is as signal as the superiority of the ancients in matters of taste. History is more exact, and it is more exact not only in the letter but in the spirit. When Dionysius said that history is philosophy, he was far from realizing what is meant by the philosophy of history. The material for supplying it did not yet exist to any extent. Fiction was introduced to conceal the want of fact, and, owing to the condition of traditional evidence, fiction was sometimes accepted as fact. The knowledge of one generation depended on the memory of the preceding. It was easy, therefore, to impose where it was so difficult to discriminate. In modern times the great characteristic of history is its truthfulness and authenticity. The possession of genuine documents at once precludes the presence of the supposititious element. As these documents accumulated, that element became more and more ignored, and a writer who should now return to the model of Guicciardini or Buchanan would pass for a romancer. Thucydides complains with some bitterness of the incorrect notions the men of his time

had even of such contiguously antecedent events as the murder of Hipparchus. He blames them, with great justice, for trusting without examination to traditional report. Such a complaint would now be uncalled for, because such a state of things would now be impossible. The Record Office is a surety against it. Individual curiosity is a surety against it too. Great indeed would be the astonishment of an ancient historian at that inquisitive faculty of our own day, against which nothing seems proof, which penetrates into the charnel-houses of the past, reanimates the dry bones of history, and from the accumulated dusts of ages recovers and reconstitutes the broken fragments of evidence almost despaired of, deciphers the musty diplomacy of courts, interprets the whispers of the closet, republishes the noisy deliberations of the senate-house, and exposes, in all their natural preservation, the mysterious intrigues of the innermost bedchamber. With such sources at his command the historian has no need of fictitious embellishment to excite interest. His acquaintance with the defunct dynasties of his country, though less dramatically paraded, is far more intimate and special than that which Herodotus has feigned with Croesus and Cambyses. He can realize the motives, habits, and very lineaments of the great departed patriots and benefactors of his race as vividly as Thucydides did those of Pericles. And he is more familiar with its traitors and its scourges than Sallust was with Cataline. No dialogue in Xenophon has ever commanded such credit as those few sentences which passed between the victim and his executioner on the scaffold of More. No integral speech in Tacitus or Livy presents half such trustworthy claims as the shortest summary in Macaulay or Hume. At the same time it must be owned that, if we have preserved the matter, we have not preserved the manner. The sum-

maries of Macaulay and Hume are every whit as characteristic of their authors as anything to be found in Tacitus or Livy.

Oratory, like satire, is nourished by the disasters of society. The stagnation of prosperous repose, the nurse of every other art, is fatal to it. Like the genius in Shakspeare, it thrives best in a tempest. Its element is an atmosphere of ferment, and the greater the fermentation, the more spiritual and refined its flavour. Thus the period when eloquence at Athens was at its height, was precisely the period when Athenian demoralization was most complete. While Athens was still the eye of Greece, while her supremacy in arts and war and social development was still unquestioned, the fame of her eloquence was nowhere. At last the crisis came. Coalitions were formed against her. Disunion prevailed among her patriots. Distrust predominated among her allies. Her tributaries insulted her. Her provinces revolted from her. Her territories were ravaged. All the vials of wrath seemed to be poured out upon her. Her fleets, proud with the ancient fame of Salamis and Mycale, fled before navies which, compared with her own, were but as of yesterday. Her armies, once the terror of the barbarians, languished in the quarries of its Syracusan captors. Her free citizens were converted into slaves, and the arms of the insolent conqueror were hung up in the halls of the Imperial republic. Then it was, in the gloomy setting of her material dominion, that the sun of her eloquence dawned upon the ruins of her falling empire. And ere that dawn had burst forth into the dazzling splendour of its noonday blaze, the cup of suffering had been drunk to the very dregs. The sceptre had passed away for ever. A despot fiercer than he of Babylon had put his hand on the fair virginity of Grecian civilization. The viceroy of a despot domineered over

the countrymen of Epaminondas and Pericles. Macedonian cohorts had claimed to be the legislators of the Peloponnesus, and the sons of Peloponnesian sages and heroes swelled the barbarous triumph of a Macedonian king. It was then, in the midst of every calamity and every degradation, in the expiring agony of her closing gasp, that the accents of Demosthenes lent their awful thunder to the scene.

The same phenomenon, produced by similar causes, occurred likewise at Rome. The great republic of the Scipios and the Gracchi had turned its liberty into licence. Domestic and civil discord reigned in every corner. Faction was pitted against faction; and family against family. New phases of sedition were daily calling forth new laws. Demagogues and incendiaries held the comitia and tribunals. The magistrates, brow-beaten, despaired of the public safety. There was no justice in the forum; no security in the senate. Such were the worthless times that produced that noble race of orators, of whose memory the world is still proud. In such times each busy hour is a subject of declamation for the orator. He takes stock of every opportunity. A political assault, a riot, a libel, the smallest act of incivism, all are so much capital to him. It certainly is to be regretted that the material necessary for the development of oratory is to be found only in such times. But that this is the natural law of oratory, its progress throughout the world demonstrates. Demosthenes would not have been known but for Philip. The oration for Quinctius and Archias would never have made the reputation of Cicero. It was not in the learned silence of an academical nursery that Burke and Mirabeau were rocked and dandled into orators. It was no fortuitous association that linked the fame of Fox with the fortunes of Washington.

The subsequent history of eloquence in Rome leads more strongly to the same conclusion. The republic was sacrificed. To the reign of turbulence had succeeded that settled calm which generally follows the involuntary suppression of the conflicting elements of popular misgovernment. The genius of liberty had, in fact, fled, and with liberty had gone, too, the genius of eloquence. Any one who is at the pains to compare the later speeches of Cicero with his speeches during and before his consulship, his speech for Marcellus, for instance, with his speech against Cataline, or that for Ligarius with that against Marc Antony, may discern without difficulty the contrast in the tone of the two manners, as representing the contrast in the temper of the two periods. Still later, that contrast became more and more marked and insisted on by writers. Tacitus, if Tacitus be the author of the "Tract on Eloquence" usually ascribed to him, laments with some degree of passion the change ; and not without a ludicrous pathos deplores the new narrow robe, the little room, and the circumscribing hour-glass as indicative of the revolution which had overtaken oratory. To govern a people unused to tyranny in safety, it is necessary to govern them in ignorance. The public taste was therefore corrupted, in order to ensure public subordination. Invention was turned into less dangerous channels. Instead of high questions of politics or ethics, questions which would have been despised by the ingenious triflers of scholasticism, about cases of magic, oracular responses, and stepdames more unnatural than poets could make them, were regularly discussed by becurled young declaimers who would not for their reputations have called a pickled herring or a bulrush by their names. For the impassioned themes with which Cicero shook the senate, were substituted subjects which even the genius of Juvenal

has not caricatured. Indeed a general crusade set in against Cicero, as against the orator of liberty. Every young anti-Ciceronian who could stumble through a book or two of Thucydides, called himself an Attic, and sneered at the memory of the great orator as an Asiatic. A sort of euphuism became the fashion at the court of Augustus, analogous to that which reigned at the court of our first James. Suetonius tells us that Augustus, who affected to be a writer, was a professed enemy to the ornamental diction of the preceding age. He tells us that he introduced several improprieties into the Latin tongue, and he gives us some whimsical particulars. Mæcenas, his minister, so far outdid his master, that the latter laughed at him. All the mob of courtiers took up the cry. The Greek rhetoricians, who swarmed at Rome, readily took the side of the Attics. It has been noticed that Horace does not once mention Cicero, and Virgil without reserve gave up the palm of eloquence to the Greeks. Quintilian tells us that the two Asinii Polliones, father and son, attacked him with great acrimony, and that the younger Pollio wrote a book to prove his father the better orator of the two. Such were the twin fates of Oratory and of Rome.

If the revolutionary atmosphere of ancient States gave ample opportunity for the development of eloquence, it must be acknowledged that no device was neglected to make eloquence what it was, unsurpassed. The whole system of national education, if it had any definite object, seemed to propose to itself the creation of a breed of national orators. There was no divorce between the student and the man of eloquence. The Athenian boy buried his silent head in no well-thumbed books. The Athenian man spent no midnight oil in the solitary speculations of science or art. All his knowledge had been gained orally. What he knew of history he had

learnt from the lips of men who had composed and acted it. What he knew of philosophy he had acquired from the living comments of sages who had propounded it. In the course of his intellectual existence he had perhaps heard with his own ears, and in the public gathering of his nation, the great traveller recount his wondrous tales of Egyptian and Babylonian story. Later in life he had sat beneath the palm-trees of the Academia, and listened while the old man eloquent discussed, in the language of a god, on more than mortal truths. As time advanced and the individual became absorbed into the citizen, the taste which early culture had originated, the claims of duty and self-defence confirmed. The capricious tyranny of revolution might at any moment place him in the dock before the Prytanes. To the motive of apprehension was superadded that of ambition. Every fear and every hope, the enmity of the great, the malignity of the poor, the flatteries of foreign potentates, the courtship of domestic magistracies, the admiration of a crowd of clients, the curule chair of the consul, these were the stimulants to oratorical distinction. Nor was there any difficulty of preferment. The saying of Hobbes, that a democracy is an aristocracy of orators, subject to the monarchy of a single orator, contains some truth, though it is the truth decked in an invidious guise. The reason is plain. Everything is done by deliberation, and every one has an equal right of deliberation. The division of labour is not marked as in a close government. The general is a statesman, and both are necessarily orators. In this state of things any one may hope to be a Themistocles or a Cæsar.

As the demand for eloquence increased, the supplies became greater. At length a division took place. Oratory became a separate profession. Nor can it be denied by this division oratory was improved. It was

much more reasonable that a rhetor who should give his whole time to the practice of the trade, should turn out a better commodity than a soldier like Themistocles. But what oratory gained in quality it lost in morality. The pursuit of eloquence became a pursuit of gain, and the moment it became an affair of gain, it ceased to be an affair of principle. The rhetoricians accordingly betrayed all the tactics of mercenary soldiers. Attached to no individual convictions, without party, without patriotism, warm in language, cold in heart, like the Free Lances of the Middle Ages, or like the professional advocates of the French senate, they hired out their services from one faction to another, and even from one country to another. Democrats to-day, aristocrats to-morrow, pocketing the pay now of the demagogue of Athens, now of the oligarch of Sparta, now of the tyrant of Macedon, such were the Lysias and Isocrates, the Demades and Æschines of the Athenian bema.

It is probably owing to the operation of a system like this, combined with certain diverse features in criminal legislation, that classical eloquence presents to the modern student anomalies so offensive, and apparently so irreconcilable. The laws were few, the judges were many. Hence, instead of being the mere interpreters of the law; they were invested with the office of legislators. The business of the pleader was therefore manifest. The study of eloquence was more necessary to him than the study of jurisprudence. He felt no responsibility to codes, and he dreaded no restraint from the wholesome guidance of precedent. To prove the accused guilty, or rather to extract a verdict of guilty from the judges who also sat as jurors, and to exaggerate his punishment, by exaggerating his guilt, this was his object. To do this, the most bitter invective, the semblance of personal hatred, the subterfuge of political expediency, all those

weapons, in a word, which the more impartial justice of modern times denounces with a vengeance, were the common expedients. The only parallel, indeed, which could be suggested in modern judicial investigation would be found in some of the state trials of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of the diatribes of Lysias and Demosthenes will be found to be admirable archetypes of that sort of judicial rhetoric, which passed current before a Scroggs and a Jeffries.

Even the deliberative eloquence partook largely of this vituperative character. The speeches of Demosthenes and Cicero contain matter that would have made even such furious adepts as Swift and Junius stare and gasp. The fact may be accounted for and in part palliated by the consideration that Cicero and Demosthenes held the same position and fulfilled the same functions in their society, that Swift and Junius did in the generation that belonged to them. There was no press. All the medium of communication was oral discussion. Discussion therefore discharged the offices of dissertation. Political satire spoke in the objective guise of scenic representation. Political speculation intruded itself at every unseemly opportunity on the bema and the rostrum. The drama of Aristophanes did for the Sophists what the more formal circulation of Butler's poems did for the Puritans. Demosthenes—I refer to his forensic efforts—sometimes pleaded in the style of a debate. Lysias wrote lampoons. Isocrates composed pamphlets.¹

The effects of the latitude allowed by the simplicity of the laws were not diminished by the multiplicity of the judges; imagination, unconfined by the limits of statutes and the letter of legal decisions, found full scope for a free exercise. All the artifices of seduction

¹ It is but fair to say, that this happy characterization of the oratorical productions of Isocrates, is due to Lord Monboddo.

were put in force. The Roman, like the Grecian, was a slave to his age. Effect to him was everything. The objective features of oratory, the statuary, and the millinery, were accordingly a potentiality in themselves. They were half of conviction. The arrangement of posture and dress assumed an importance which to us seems frivolous. Cicero, on one occasion, reproaches Quintius, as for a criminal act, for the folds of his robes floating about his heels. With an audience but half reconciled to the embroidered rhetoric of a brocaded beau, like Bubb Dodington, the change of a familiar periwig might interrupt the fascination of the studied phrase and the courtier-like period.¹ But none of his most violent rivals ever thought of taunting Fox with the slovenly carriage of his sword, or the dirtiness of his linen, or impeaching Grattan for the colour of his yellow gloves. Quintilian has been inculpated for his laborious attention to the study of attitudes in his "Institutes." Quintilian was a generous man and a tolerably just critic. Though a Roman and at war with the Grecian rhetoricians, he has a good word for all the classic authors of Greece, compares Homer to Jupiter, apologizes for Demosthenes, and speaks more highly than they deserved of Lysias and Isocrates. He has been accused of flattery to Domitian. But the truth is, he does not employ towards Domitian one-half the fulsomeness of expression that an Anglican divine did towards Charles II., and a French divine towards Louis XIV. Those who blame him should blame the system under which he wrote, and which he denounces while he attempts to improve. When he tells his pupils how to direct the eyes and to hold the head, what is the right management of the eyelid and the eyebrow, and what of the muscle of the cheek, how to command the nose and lip, and when to show the teeth,

¹ Cumberland's "Memoirs."

he is but paying obeisance to the temper of the times. A course of oratorical tuition was no trifling matter to a Roman youth. To learn how to sway his sides, to slap his thigh, and stamp his foot, was as important as that he should be nice in the choice of his words, syllables, and even letters. It was not enough that he should be able to define the difference between an enthymema and an epichirema, a thesis and an hypothesis, a trope and a figure; that he should be fully acquainted with the five divisions of rhetoric, the three kinds of causes, and the three kinds of states, it was necessary that he should be conversant with all the technicalities of gesture, that he should be able to interpret the language of the hand, that he should know what position of the forefinger and thumb meant demonstration, what affirmation, and what argumentation; that he should be advised how to wear the bandage round his legs, how to arrange the purple border of his angusticlave, how to compose his hair, and to wipe the sweat from his face.

In proportion to their artistic devotion, the judicial audiences of antiquity were equally sensitive. A trial, therefore, not unfrequently presented all the pathetic contrivances of a drama. Waxen models, images, pictures, and a hundred other childish devices that would not now be tolerated in a theatre, formed the ordinary decorations of a court. The objective genius of antiquity indeed is nowhere better illustrated than in their legal proceedings. The contrast between the formalities of the Old Bailey, or Westminster Hall, and those of the Areopagus or the Forum, could, if mutually witnessed, have produced in their respective audiences nothing but mutual repulsion. An Englishman can have but little sympathy with that sentimental justice that yields to the exposure of a beautiful bosom, and melts into tears

at the sight of a bloody cloak or a gaping wound. A Roman or a Grecian, on the other hand, would have regarded with supreme disgust the impartial majesty of that stern judicature which saw unpitied the weeping children of Strafford, looked unmoved at the bleeding loins of Lilburne, and laughed aloud at the impassioned dagger of Burke.

Though oratory at Rome was naturally more prolific and its chances of survival greater, it has been the good fortune of Grecian oratory, as far at least as quantity goes, to justify its claims to a superior immortality. The single name of Cicero comprehends almost the sole pretensions of Italian eloquence to preservation, and certainly constitutes its claims for excellence. If we set Cicero against Demosthenes, we have no extant names to oppose to *Æschines*, to *Lysias*, or *Isocrates*. Had it been otherwise, had any of the great speakers upon whose merits and defects Cicero has bequeathed to us one of the most delightful pieces of antique criticism that exists, been represented at the tribunal of posterity, it is not unlikely that their reputation would have been as completely absorbed in that of the orator who has preserved their fame, as the reputation of *Æschines* and his compeers has been in that of Demosthenes.

With no author in antiquity have we a more familiar acquaintance than we have with Cicero. And unhappily, it may be added, no author has ever suffered more by our familiarity. Of Demosthenes we know with certainty little, and that little is all in his favour. The collection of Cicero's letters which time has left us, forms a stereoscopic view of the writer's habits and disposition for the purposes of characterization, unequalled in literature. Perhaps the work that comes nearest to them in modern times is the "Epistolary Essays" of Montaigne. As

might be inferred, I have no affection for the character of Cicero. He certainly is not a man after my heart. Plutarch, according to his fashion, has drawn an ingenious parallel in his destiny and that of Demosthenes. He has confined it to their political careers. There the parallel begins, and there it most assuredly ends. Everything else about them must be illustrated by contrast. In their moral, as in their literary idiosyncrasies, they are wide as the poles asunder. There was something of the modern Greek in Cicero, tricky, time-serving, and specious. There was something of the old Roman about Demosthenes, firm, patriotic, undaunted against odds. The emphasis on the *τὸ πρότερον*, which runs through his works, seasoning and flavouring them with an honest piquancy, is remarkable. His simplicity, indeed, belonged to the heroic ages. His generation could not understand a man whose whole intelligence was exhausted in identifying the moral and the virtuous with the political, or rather in substituting the one motive for the other. It speaks well for his noble reliance on, his hearty belief and confidence in the better part of his nation. But, had it not been their interest to appear disinterested, it is to be feared his system would have damned him as a politician. That the Thebans should forget their enmities and the Athenians their defeat on moral grounds, was an idea that could only have imposed on the sensitive soul of an orator flattered by his own warmth into the conviction. The arms of Philip had more to do with it than the ethics of Demosthenes. With Cicero, on the other hand, expediency, as a principle of action, was all in all. A man so egotistic could have had no sublimer rule of conduct. His egotism was, in truth, disgusting. It certainly is better founded than that of Falstaff; but it is quite as intrusive. It insinuates itself at every

odd moment. When it is not arrogant, it is affected. When it does not strut, it creeps. The reader cannot enjoy the familiar gossip of the letter-writer without being interrupted by the purple of the Consul. We never lose sight of the man who put Cataline to flight, and saved the capitol. The boast is doubtless justifiable, and in a modest man would not have been without a well-earned gracefulness. But Cicero had not a grain of modesty in his whole composition. He was habitually vain, and everything that he said or did was adulterated by his vanity. His love of his country was of a peculiar kind. He certainly possessed it, but it was not disinterested. He loved the welfare of his country because it involved his own welfare. Its triumphs had been his triumphs. All his personal glory had been associated with the defeat of its enemies and the success of its friends. Hence a less vain man than Cicero might have imposed on himself, might have mistaken the real motives of his patriotism. This self-delusion was all that distinguished him for the better from the men who would sooner have seen their country sink, provided their mullet-ponds were safe. His selfishness leaks out from a hundred little imprudent apertures in his correspondence. It was by serving his country that he had gained his authority in the senate-house, and his figure at the bar. It was by continuing to serve his country that he could avoid the mortification he so much dreaded, that six hundred years hence Pompey should be better known than himself. This dread of extinction displays itself to a painful degree in his absence in Syria. Though that government justly authorized his self-congratulation, and the congratulation of his friends, he was miserable. And why was he miserable? Not because Pacorus had crossed the Euphrates with an army of Parthians, but because Cicero is determining causes at Laodicea while

Plotius is pleading in the Forum; not because Cicero is at the head of two legions, but because Pompey is at the head of an army.

His vanity made him the victim of every one who took the pains to impose upon him. The solemn trifler, Pompey, the astute Cæsar, courted and won him by turns. On the other hand, his busy diplomacy gave him the semblance of imposing on others. He flattered his flatterers. He fawned upon Cæsar. He then fawned upon Cæsar's murderer, Brutus, and next he fawned upon Cæsar's heir, Octavius. He flattered Antony, yet he acknowledged it as a great omission that Antony did not suffer on the Ides of March. He flattered Dolabella, though he could not refrain from owning that he hated him. A good deal of this inconsistency, I believe, must be put down to any other feeling than that of deliberate villany. It was probably a compound of that morbid sensibility that would have urged Quinctius to falsify history, and that morbid fear that attempted to urge Atticus to repudiate one of his early orations for him. He was always vacillating between a consideration for the safety of his life and a consideration for the safety of his reputation. He fled as soon as he thought it dangerous to remain. He returned as soon as his friends ridiculed him for flying.¹ His whole conduct presents a strange divorce between the philosopher and the statesman, between the man of letters and the man of action. He wrote against glory, and was the slave of it. He wrote about the philosophy of consolation, and he was inconsolable. His affectation of content indeed was marvellously strong, but it only helped to render his discontent more palpable. Instead of the consul who braved the daggers of Clodius, we have nothing but a dejected old driveller, half stifled

¹ Lib. 16, iii. Ep.

with rheum and tears, and half choked with cursing the day of his own birth. He would not be comforted. Never was a man oppressed with such a weight of calamity. Never had a man more reason to wish for death. He would not see his brother, because he would not have his brother see his inexpressible misery. Yet in the midst of all this the assumption of the man is marvellous. The expressions remind me of Bolingbroke, as indeed they must remind anybody who ever compared the letters to Atticus with the letter to Pope. He had given up the world. He intended to study, to bequeath himself to philosophy, to the nine Muses.¹ Indifference was a greater comforter than hope. He had no curiosity left. Though each remove from Rome extracted a more pitiable protest, and the courier who did not bring a letter full of gossip from his friend, was sure to take back one full of complaint and remonstrance. The least change in fortune rouses him. The repeal of his banishment puts him into the other extreme. In an instant all his resolutions are gone. The tears are dried up. Sunshine peeps out on the face that had relinquished hope. And in a little while no one can trace the philosopher or the exile in the correspondent who fills his letters with delirious accounts how all Brundisium rang with acclamations at his approach; how all Rome, whose greeting was worth having, turned out to greet him; how the gates of the city and the stairs of the public temples, up to the very capitol, thronged with shouting masses, eager to welcome the "Father of his country."

Demosthenes is egotistic. But his is an egotism of another kind from Cicero's. It was singularly unobtrusive and timid. He says himself that the mere thought of talking of oneself made him shrink as from a vulgar

¹ Ep. v.

and offensive artifice.¹ Only once does he recapitulate his past services to his country, and that was for the purpose of authorizing and justifying a renewed offer of service. What he had said on former occasions would make them appreciate better what he had to say now. And if there is any vanity in the instances he proceeds to enumerate, his conclusion would more than apologize for it. It at once expresses the modesty and the high sense of morality of Demosthenes. If he had shown greater foresight in these instances of his, he meant not to boast. He ascribed it to no superior sagacity of his own. There were but two sources by which he pretended to anticipate the future—fortune, that beats the ingenuity of man, and contradicts his expectations, and an honest and just estimate of things, which kept the obscuring filth of lucre from his political discernment.

In the literary merits of the two great actors there is a still greater contrast. Quintilian's criticism, that nothing can be added to Cicero, nothing can be taken from Demosthenes, is one of those vague, unmeaning antitheses that sometimes disfigure criticism. It has been a great favourite; and if I recollect rightly, it has been pilfered by a great critic of the last century to distinguish the characteristics of Dryden and Pope. To extract any positive idea of their oratorical excellence from it, to arrive even at any comparative dimensions of their intellectual stature, would be impossible. It would be just as possible to ascertain the physical proportions of two men, one of whom should be depicted as taller than Tom Thumb, and the other not so tall as the Norfolk Giant. Though Quintilian's criticism is thus defective, it would be scarcely worth while at this late hour to supply its deficiencies. The style of the two authors varies with their characters. Cicero the pleader

¹ Or. to Peace.

is Cicero the consul still—the man who loves to hear his name echoed in the market-place, the official enamoured of the gewgaws of office, the flatteries of obsequious clients, the plaudits of a wondering senate. Every startling turn, every happy repartee, is evidently intended as a personal demonstration, an affidavit of ability on the part of the speaker. Like the language of Bayes, his language aims at elevating and surprising. The attention of the hearer is at once attracted from the matter to the man. His complaint that Demosthenes did not fill his ears suggests at once his own tastes and Demosthenes' manner. In the dazzling fence of rhetoric he was far more scientific than the Grecian. He uses every fence that art supplies with diligent dexterity. Indeed, he may be said not so much to have fulfilled the rules of art as to have multiplied or created them. If critics have drawn their scientific terms and definitions from Aristotle, it is from the magazine of Cicero's works they have taken their exemplifications. Demosthenes could never have supplied Quintilian with the illustrative material of his richly-illustrated treatise. To Demosthenes, indeed, the command of the witty and pathetic, and consequently the command of all those postures and turns which the witty and pathetic supply, and which make the deepest impression on the modern reader, was denied by the laws or the prejudices of his country.

But, had it been otherwise, I doubt if they were genial to his peculiar mental constitution. There is but one instance of anything approaching to facetiousness that I recollect in all his works, and that is too bad to excite the mirth of even the best-humoured Tory. It occurs in the "Embassy." Æschines, who had been accused of corruption, rebuked the violent attitude of one of his accusers by a reference to the statue of Solon, who was represented as speaking with his hand deco-

rously folded under his mantle. The raillery lies in Demosthenes' retort, "Not to speak with the hand folded, but to execute your embassy with the hands folded, that is your duty." Demosthenes' style was, in fact, a business one. Various and diversified, free from all mannerism, it would be almost impossible to parody it. In the texture of its members it is a model of simplicity and chastity. It is not impossible to find whole orations where there is not a single prominent epithet. This barrenness of diction is compensated for by the marvellous arrangement of the words. Move them, and you break the charm. The rhythm is the sense. You destroy not only the ring of the sentence, but its significance. You not only diminish the verbal force of the expression, you enervate the intensity of the meaning. Of no modern orations can this be said, unless it be of some of the orations in Milton. The similarity of structure, indeed, in the comprehensive, long, and parenthetical sentences, may be something more than fanciful, when it is remembered to what expedients the Grecian resorted to lengthen his wind, and that Garrick confessed himself unable to pronounce the periods of the English poet.

It is very far from true, however, that Demosthenes is destitute of all the ornaments of oratory. His speeches abound in the happiest figures. The "Olynthiacs" especially are fertile in metaphors, analogies, and similes. The famous comparison of the Cloud, on which his admirers love to dwell, has only been surpassed, I think, by the Great Black Cloud of Burke.¹ Nothing is to be found in Cicero so imposing as the sublime invocation of the heroic spirits of Marathon. For modern oratory, no room is left for such invocations. They died out with the kindly superstition of the pagan

¹ Speech on Nabob of Arcot's Debts.

theogony. If they linger anywhere in any effectiveness, it is in the eloquence of Roman Catholic senates. With Protestantism they lose half their force, by having lost all their credit. Talon, invoking on his knees the spirit of St. Louis to look down with compassion on his divided parliaments, and Pitt invoking the genius of the British Constitution, are as different in nature as the concrete and the abstract. In minute painting, in historical characterization, Demosthenes is undoubtedly deficient. What he has left us in that manner, however, speaks rather against his inclination than his ability. The scene in the city, on the seizure of Elatea by Philip, and the banquet scene in the house of Xénophon, are given with all the vivid colouring and the realizing skill of Herodotus. The comparison of Æschines to a fracture or sprain, most prominent where the body is most diseased, is at once a happy sarcasm and a nice analogy.

Hume, in contrasting the austere, rational manner of Demosthenes with the rhetorical and richly-decorated style of Cicero, has hesitated at the apparent inconsistency involved by the distinctive character of the separate audiences. He is puzzled that the rhymes, the puns, the jingles, and all the artifices of wit and pathos should have been bestowed on the refined assemblies of Rome; and the vehement reasoning, the chastened harmony, be reserved for the lowest vulgar of Athens. The fact is, it is precisely because the Roman assemblies were more refined than the Grecian, that the oratory of the Roman speaker was more effective. Ratiocination is, generally speaking, thrown away on a cultivated audience, where the common sense of the common people demands and yields to it. Its own reasons are generally founded on acute discrimination, and are therefore less likely to be moved by the reason of another. Its principles are prejudices, and its prejudices are seldom amenable to the

mere external influence of argument. It is not so with its passions and its sensibilities. Cultivated as it is, it has by its very culture become the victim of its tastes. Conviction, therefore, is to be come at through its feelings. Where it would despise an enthymeme, it surrenders to a trope. Cæsar would never have absolved Deiotanes against his fixed resolution, had the Oration for Deiotanes contained simply all the subtlety of Lysias. The effect of Burke's appeal to the imagination of his hearers, as he detailed to them, scene after scene, the desolating tyranny of Warren Hastings—the murders, the desecrations, the confiscations—is well known. It is equally well known what was the effect on the same class of hearers of his argumentative efforts, the elaborate reasonings, the profound philosophy, and the laborious historical illustrations.

To return to Demosthenes. In comparing his juridical with his deliberative pieces, we are at once struck with his superior self-adaptability over his Roman rival. Cicero's style is always uniform. Whatever be the nature of his subject, he is always on stilts. In the private orations of Demosthenes we come at once on a new manner. In that against Androtion, and in that against Leptines, for example, we look in vain for the author of the "Embassy" and the "Crown." The copiousness, the force, and the grandeur are exchanged for a simple, temperate, and rational conciseness. In point of legal assimilation, the orations of the Greek master come nearer to modern models than those of Cicero. The causes why legal arguments, and the observance of legal forms, especially at Rome, were so lax, have been already hinted at; and though Cicero himself complains of the ridiculous arrogance of the illiterate swaggerers that loiter about the courts of justice and the tribunals of the proctors, ready to undertake any suit, however intricate, of

guardianship, agnation, circumlutions, wills, or property, his own pleadings predicate no necessary acquaintance with prescriptive laws. This renders the likeness between his forensic and his political efforts more conspicuous. In Demosthenes it is otherwise, though even in Demosthenes there are anomalies, sometimes ludicrous and sometimes criminal, which stand out from the otherwise equable canvas, and mar the general resemblance. The speech against Midias, for example, whether delivered or not, is read with tolerable complaisance, till a sudden regret on the part of the speaker, that he had no children to produce before the jury, shocks our propriety, and the production of a categorical table of the defendant's misdeeds since his childhood confirms the revulsion.

No sketch of ancient oratory, I am well aware, could have any pretensions to completeness without a more than casual reference to one department almost confined to ancient oratory, that of epideictic eloquence. It is, however, for this very reason, that a casual reference is inadequate to its treatment, that I must leave it untouched.

In passing on to a survey of modern oratory, it is found that the law which regulated the development of ancient eloquence, and which gave to Longinus his proud contrast between the elocutional fame of despotic Persia and free Hellas, has never ceased to operate. Freedom still assists her foster-child; and if we would watch its growth to matured vitality, if we would sit by its cradle and admire its manhood, it is to the land of freedom that we must recur, the land of Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights.

In tracing the harmonious development of our liberty and our eloquence, it must be acknowledged that our liberty once lisped. The intentions of its early cham-

pions were superior to their utterance. They were men of deeds, not words, as men who could not decipher their Psalter were likely to be. The language was such as became them, curt, matter-of-fact, and to the purpose, more like the language of lawyers than legislators. A rough remonstrance against some fresh usurpation of the prerogative, or a categorical schedule of grievances drawn up in the unembossed diction of a notary or a clerk, was the extent of Parliamentary rhetoric. At length, the sudden spread of classical learning consequent on the Renaissance, and the spread of biblical literature consequent on the Reformation, displayed a twofold influence, at once classical and religious, on its character. It passed at once from one extreme to the other, from excess of simplicity to excess of pedantry. Hitherto the pedantry had been left to some sage bishop or chancellor, big with the grandeur of the Painted Chamber and the learned import of his Latin thesis. Now every honest burgess tried to exhibit his little stock of letters, and brought his Aristotle or his Plato to bear against a question of usury as readily as the theologian brought his St. Augustine or St. Ambrose in support of church attendance.¹ Henry VIII. is Hannibal and the Good Shepherd, a Solomon for justice, a Samson for strength, and an Absalom for beauty.² Sometimes the speaker indulges in as many conceits as an ode of Cowley. "The great world," we are told, "contains three several divisions—the divine world, the celestial world, and the terrestrial world; man, a microcosm, a little world, has also three parts—a head, a heart, and inferior members. After the likeness of these is the English Constitution framed. The King is the head. The Peers the body. The Commons the rest of the machine." The Marian orators are at their wit's end for terms to designate the

¹ 755, "Parl. Hist."

² 527.

enactments of their predecessors. They are Draco's laws; they are the laws of a more cruel Dionysius. Under Elizabeth the records of Parliamentary oratory increase in dignity. One great name among her councillors begins to excite a more than ordinary curiosity. Bacon spoke as he wrote. In his speeches, indeed, such as we have them, he does not altogether appear the searching philosopher and the ingenious inquirer that he does in his writings. But the manner in both is the same, cogent yet fluent, and with a certain sententious amplitude of diction that betokens a mind easily stimulated and easily controlled. There is far more imaginativeness in his earlier speeches than there is in his earlier writings. His speech on the Bill for Suppressing Abuses in Weights and Measures is singularly playful, lively, and animated. It perhaps can hardly be expected that in a court like that of James I., where a quibble was a test of loyalty, and pedantry a test of good breeding, that he should have escaped the infection. His later speeches and addresses are accordingly disfigured with all the fashionable vice. One expression is so comic, in that saddest of biographical documents, the "Submission to the Lords," that even the seriousness of the occasion cannot restrain a smile. "I hope," he says, "I may justify myself with Job, that I have not concealed my sin, as did Adam, nor hid my faults in my bosom. It rests, therefore, that *without fig-leaves*, I make confession and acknowledgment."¹ Ben Jonson's description of Lord Bacon as an orator must be accepted with qualifications. Such a speaker must always have possessed an undue influence on such a listener: "His language, where he could spare, or pass by a jest, was nobly censorious. No man ever spake more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered.

¹ 1238.

No member of his speech, but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough or look aside from him without loss. He commanded when he spoke, and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. The fear of every man that heard him was, lest he should make an end."¹

The settlement of the new religious regulation opened up the sluices of history, and afforded unusual opportunity for the fluency of debate. The doctrinal questions that continually arose gave, in particular, novel stimulants to theological oratory. Perhaps at no other time has the Episcopal Bench displayed greater rhetorical pretensions. The speech of the Bishop of Chester, and that of the Archbishop of York, on the Act of Supremacy, are elaborate and erudite attempts. To understand their claims, they must be ranked in the same class with those profound and original historical treatises which have sometimes marked the political discussion of great constitutional questions, with the speech of Whitelocke, for instance, on changing the old law style from French into English, and the speech of Somers on the Abdication question.

The Rebellion came, and with it set in a strong contrast. High and fundamental questions, affecting the basis of society, left no room for ceremonious trifling. The peculiar characteristics of the movement imparted a strong impress to the oratory. It was unquestionably the oratory of the undisciplined, but of the impassioned, of men more earnest in the expression of their feelings than choice in the selection of their language. They spoke as the spirit within gave them utterance. The mouth spake out of the fulness of the heart. Their speech was fervent and excited. It retained, therefore, the features of fervour and great agitation, an ungraceful, entangled, disorderly dialect; a strange gibberish of

¹ Discourses: "De Claris Oratoribus."

political philosophy and religion, foolishness to the Jews, and to the Greeks a stumbling-block, but full of significance to the inspired lips that uttered it, needing no interpreter to the enraptured ears that listened to it.

The period dating from the Restoration to the Revolution is for the purposes of oratorical illustration comparatively barren. The political reputation of such names as Clarendon, Shaftesbury, Somers, and Halifax have well nigh absorbed their oratorical fame. The period was, however, the birth-time of debate—of that bastard composition, a little less than oratorical, and a little more than colloquial, which requires an attentive ear rather than a laborious memory, and a ready tongue rather than an eloquent one. But though the science of debate was developed by artists whose skill has never been excelled, there are no really distinguished orators, with the exception, perhaps, of Halifax, till the appearance of the brilliant and versatile Bolingbroke. What Bolingbroke's oratory was, we have nothing whereby to form a decision. Pitt thought the discovery of one of his speeches a greater boon than the discovery of any extinct piece of antiquity. I think, however, it may be said generally what it was not. It was not very argumentative; nor apt to descend into particulars, or to take refuge in statistics; neither abusively personal, nor bombastically egotistic. This I judge, partly from the style of his works, partly from the temperament of the speaker, and partly from the characteristics of the age in which the speaker lived. Those who are familiar with the debates of the period will readily recognize what those characteristics were. There was, in fact, and properly speaking, no debating. There was much fine declamation, abundant indulgence in tropes and repartees, an infinite deal of nothing in a word, but no logical exposition of views. The truth is, the logical part was done out of doors. If

a minister wanted to convince his party, forthwith some pamphlet, bearing the title of the "Crisis," or the "Conduct of the Allies," took the understanding of the town by storm. By this arrangement sufficient room was left for a course of study in the graces of oratory within doors. The requirements of this education are best told in the language of one of its most accomplished disciples. Here is Chesterfield's receipt for making a speaker: "Take of common sense *quantum sufficit*, and a little application to the rules and orders of the House." Throw obvious thoughts in a new light, and make up the whole with a large quantity of purity and elegance of style. Graceful utterance pleases their "eyes and ears, but strong reason is thrown away upon them."¹ This was no fanciful article merely inserted to gratify a fanciful system of æsthetics. It was advice earned from experience. He had himself, he tells us, when he first entered the House, felt a certain awe upon him. But that feeling soon vanished when a better acquaintance discovered to him that out of all the five hundred and sixty who heard him, not above thirty could understand reason, all the rest having ears to hear, but no sense to judge. He had seen some of the shallowest wits of his day triumph over solid genius, and he had seen genius descend, perforce, to the artifices of mediocrity. Lord Chancellor Cowper was a man well worthy to be ranked in the latter category; but if we are to credit Chesterfield's testimony, Lord Cowper's strength as an orator lay in the weakness of his reasons, and the charms of his elocution.² The Duke of Argyle was notorious for the flimsy poverty of his arguments; but he was notorious, too, for being the most pleasing speaker of his day. "He charmed, he warmed, he ravished his audience." Lord Townshend, on the contrary, never spoke but he spoke to

¹ "Chesterfield's Works," vol. ii. p. 356.² Ibid. vol. ii. p. 368.

the point, "materially, with argument and knowledge;" and, as a consequence, Lord Townshend "never pleased."

Eloquence then, and for half a century after, comprehended literally the art of elocution, and comprehended nothing more. "When you enter the House," writes that accomplished master of ceremony we have just been quoting, "you will be ranked only according to your eloquence, and by no means according to your matter. Your sole business will be to shine, not to weigh. Manner is all in all."¹ A man who should have had the courage to despise that fashionable glibness of tongue,

"The flowers of Bubo, and the flow of Yonge,"

must have endured the mortification of addressing empty benches. Burke "thought of convincing," and the effect on his hearers is the theme of verse and prose.

The contrast in the latter style of oratory does not need exemplification. The cause of the change is easily explained. The analytic mind of Cicero explained it two thousand years ago, when he wrote, "*Mirabile cum plurimum in faciendo intersit inter doctum et rudem, quum non multum differat in judicando.*"² No man hopes now to carry a favourite measure by personal philippics, or general appeals to first principles. He has to deal with a class of men who care nothing for execution, or for the artifices of style with which an argument may be stated, but who have a wonderful faculty in judging and appreciating the conclusion. He reasons, therefore, and reasons his best, because he knows that ere twelve hours are past his reasons will be weighed and commented on with logical acumen by a hundred thousand eyes. The corollary from this state of things is plain. Oratory must more and more lose that smell of the lamp which Pytheas cast in the teeth of Demosthenes. The interval that at present separates the ornate declamation of antiquity, more

¹ "Chesterfield's Works," vol. ii. p. 116.

² "De Oratore," iii. 51.

especially of Roman antiquity, from the modern debate must become wider and wider. The style of deliberative oratory must degenerate more and more into the simplicity and barrenness of practical colloquy. The statuary of oratory may still be cultivated, but the poetry and the music must decline. Quintilian would be as useless among us as Dr. Blair. A debater has but little chance of retouching his efforts like Cicero, and but little need for a portfolio of proëms such as those that the great Grecian kept by him. It is only in times of polished idleness, or of passionate fermentation, when the demands of practical business can yield to the seductions of great abstract questions—only in a country where the harmonics of political economy are more studied than its arithmetic, or only among a people ready to take rhetoric in the room of argument, more willing, in fine, to be persuaded than convinced—that a public character need fly for aid to pebbles and pitch-pipes.¹

¹ I give two specimens of the deliberative oratory of the period over which my remarks are supposed to extend. The first specimen shall be taken from one extremity of the epoch, the second from the other extremity. Both are taken from reputed masters in the art. This is the style, and these are the arguments, with which Whigs like Burnet (vol. vi. 156) would have dissuaded Tories like Harley from concluding a peace at Utrecht in defiance of the Allies: "Man was made after the image of God, the God of all truth, as we know who is the father of lies. Fidelity to engagements is therefore based on the ground that God hates the deceitful man in whose mouth there is no faithfulness; that in the less perfect religion of the Jews, when the Gibeonites had, by a fraudulent proceeding, drawn Joshua and the Israelites into a league with them, it was sacredly observed, and the violation of it severely punished; that when the last of the kings of Judah shook off the fidelity to which he had bound himself to the king of Babylon, the prophet thereupon said with indignation, 'Shall we break the oath of God and prosper?'" and then he runs off into the double-dealings of popes, and the moral maxims of Grotius and Puffendorf. I turn from the political homilist to the metaphysical politician. Here is a casual extract from that fine, that incomparable speech of Burke, on the conciliation of America:—"In every arduous enterprise we consider what we are to lose as well as what we are to gain; and the more and better stake of liberty every people possess, the less they will hazard in a vain attempt to make it more. These are the cords of man. Man acts from adequate motives relative to his

With Bolingbroke's parliamentary decease there was a sudden lull in oratory, prolonged far into the reign of the second Hanoverian king. Not that this lengthened period was without its good speakers. The names of Wyndham, of Carteret, of Pulteney, and of Walpole might well redeem the reputation of any period. It is only in juxtaposition with the more brilliant constellations of the brilliant epoch that immediately succeeded, that such lights become obscure. The characteristics of the oratory were pedantry and invective. It would be difficult to find in the oratorical annals of any age or country a spirit so pugnacious, enunciated by a tongue so licentious. To arrive at anything approaching the criminative fury with which Pulteney attacked Walpole, or Walpole attacked Pulteney, we must pass on to the times of Grattan and Flood. The eloquence of the Rotunda was at that date a strange compound of ferocity and intelligence. With something of the patriotic wisdom of an antique senate, it combined the manners of a bear-garden. In truth, the practical wisdom of the Legislature was strangely interpenetrated by the moral code of highwaymen. It certainly would take less time to enumerate the names of the members of that illustrious body who had not left the lobby with a challenge in their pockets, or been bound over to keep the peace on the very benches where they broke it, than it would to mention those who had. The long supremacy of Walpole, and the daring originality of some of his measures, irritated an opposition singularly strong in rhetorical appliances. The style of the "Craftsman" and the "Occasional Writer" was imported into Parliament. Similes, quotations, and

interest, and not on metaphysical speculations. Aristotle, the great master of reasoning, cautions us, and with great propriety, against this species of delusive geometrical accuracy in moral arguments, as the most fallacious of all sophistry," &c. &c. It would be difficult to decide which reference in the two extracts is more out of place, the appeal to the Hebrew or the Greek ethicist.

parallels from old story, as trite as those which amuse an American Congress, where a speech on the Oregon question has been supplied from the "Odyssey,"¹ crowded every attack against ministers. Sir Robert himself was sometimes Dudley or Empson, sometimes a more wicked and blasphemous Leo X.,² sometimes Sir Epicure Mammon,³ sometimes a wretched empiric dosing the British Constitution into the grave. The taste for metaphor was singularly strong, and has been noticed casually by the generally keen-sighted Horace Walpole. The eighth volume of the "Parliamentary History" affords some curious illustrations of this habit. In the debate in the Commons on the Address to the King, on the opening of the fifth session of the seventh Parliament, no less than four consecutive speakers of eminence close their speeches with similes so ingeniously far-fetched, and so laboriously applied, that they would not have misbecome the court of James I. One example is given, and, as it is by no means the worst of the series, a fair judgment may be formed of the oratory which tolerated it. "Our late affairs resemble a set of quiet, honest country-folk got into a country dance, who get through their dance with a great deal of ease and alacrity, until a turbulent, noisy fellow intrudes among them, who immediately forced himself into the dance, and made such a noise, that such a one was out, and such a one not right, such a step out of tune, and such a turn not according to rule, that they could not go on with the dance; but then at last they resolved to turn this troublesome fellow out, and they all went on quietly and easy as they had done before."⁴ On the whole, the speeches of Walpole's time are chequered compositions. Their beauties are generally fragmentary.

¹ The perpetrator was Mr. Benton. The representatives for Boston, the American Athens, are, I believe, much given to this affectation.

² 1190.

³ 1300.

⁴ 880.

They recall those poetical pieces current in France in Malherbe's time, where a few pretty lines, called by the critics "passage-verses," stand out from a very dead level of mediocrity.

Such, on a hasty view, had been the process by which English oratory attained its Attic climax. Eloquence had, doubtless, never been without its representatives, its long line of ancestors, its gallery of heroic portraits. Single and individual speeches still survive in the musty records of the Parliamentary debates that might fairly challenge the masterpieces of Chatham. But at no period before Chatham's time had there been so universal an incorporation of the man of business with the man of wit. Chesterfield, as we have seen, was so struck with the preponderance of the latter feature, that he saw in it the extinction of the former. It is all manner, he wrote, and no substance. Purity of diction, harmony of periods, and elegance of style were the instructions he gave to his son. He himself was without doubt a proficient. There is in his speeches a Pharisaical purity, a ceremonial neatness peculiar to the best-bred man and the most fastidious taste of his age. They were light, agreeable, ingenious essays, such as he might have written for the "World" or for "Fog's Journal;" and, if they were listened to with the same satisfaction with which they are read, must have been eminently successful. It is almost needless to add, that they bear without disguise the stamp of the most elaborate preparation. It must be owned that there was much in the objective features of the prevailing oratory to lead Chesterfield to his depreciatory decision. He needed not to have told us that one young member was caught through the keyhole of his door practising rhetoric by the glass, to convince us that very unusual emphasis was placed on both the statuary and the music of oratory. All that we know of the greatest

orator of the day, tends to convince us that he was also the greatest actor of his day.

Neither Demosthenes who embodied the idea, nor Cicero who strove to carry it out, nor any English orator, ever realized so completely the philosophy of action as Chatham. What distinguished him above his fellows was this, his purely physical influence over the audience. Nature had moulded him an orator. His voice was both clear and rotund. The slightest whisper could be heard above the hum of chatterers; and when he raised his tone to an elevated pitch, it startled the distant loungers of the lobbies. The cornet of cavalry had not been without its use to the statesman. His figure, erect by nature, and rendered more commanding by discipline, maintained an air of grandeur and inflexibility that rarely or never was relaxed. In moments of passion, there was something of the Sibyl on her tripod about him. The oldest member or the hardiest wit quailed before "the terrors of his beak and the lightning of his eye." Everything about him, his language, his manners, his virtues, and even his vices, were on a scale of sublimity, sometimes bordering on the confines of the ridiculous. The slightest indiscretion might imperil the effect, and this indiscretion Chatham was now and then guilty of. On such occasions, even his friends could not repudiate the nickname of Comedian for him. A certain faculty of feigning intense feeling facilitated this theatrical display. Was he summoned to deliver up the seals, he burst into tears at the feet of the king. Did he attend a state drawing-room, he bowed so low that the courtiers laughed at the hooked nose that peered through his legs. Even his infirmities were turned to account, and more than once a touch of pathos or a felicitous stroke of irony has been due to the crutch and the flannel bandage. Pitt's patriotism was large indeed, but it cannot be

denied that it was sometimes paraded very rashly, and very theatrically. In the sometimes presumptuous glorification of his country, he reminds one of those gallant princes of the middle ages, who endangered themselves wilfully, by charging barred gates, or hurrying their pennons single-handed against the foe, merely for the honour of the ladies.

After his exaltation to the House of Lords, his speaking became lecturing. No man ever ventured so to trifle with the dignity of that most dignified body. His manner became more and more dictatorial. Conscious of power, like a coquette, he too often condescended to display his power merely for the sake of the display. Sure of the submissiveness of his colleagues, he taxed their spirit of obedience that he might expose their state of dependence. His own spirit remained firm and undaunted. He frequently infringed on the rules of debate, and indeed he seemed to treat the rules of debate with ill-concealed defiance. Some of his most remarkable and most palpable successes originated at moments of an overbearing impatience of very well-merited interruptions on that score. In the House of Lords he was undoubtedly out of place. He was far more adapted for a revolutionary speaker. In a tumultuous audience like the National Assembly of France, he would have been a second Mirabeau. In some points he bears a very considerable resemblance to Mirabeau. In deportment and gesture, in the exterior qualities of the orator, there was much in common. Men who remembered the great French tribune have left distinct and careful portraits of his physique, the masculine port, the broad and bony frontal, the eagle eye that, though distorted, dismayed his audience with a look, the voice of thunder, the defiant accents that dared a reply, the hair that waved like the mane of a lion. Unlike Chatham,

Mirabeau did not improvisatize. All, or most, of his celebrated hits were the result of careful premeditation : his comparison of the Gracchi, his allusion to the Tarpeian rock, his apostrophe to Siêyes. In the delivery of his unpremeditated effusions the similitude with some modification recurs again. His frame dilated. His face convulsed. His eye shot forth flames. He roared. He stamped. His hair whitened with foam. His whole system was seized with an electric irritability, and writhed as under an almost preternatural agitation. In retort, in that kind of abrupt, indignant, disdainful repartee which crushes its victim as by a blow, he was, like Chatham, unsurpassed by any of his cotemporaries, and, like Chatham, he was singularly dexterous in converting a taunt into a victorious reprimand. Of irony, stinging, insolent irony, both the great champions were perfect masters. It would not be difficult to extend the parallel to their mental temperaments. Both men were devoured with pride, a passionate, overbearing, fierce, absorbing pride. Both were chivalrously attached to a cause, and both displayed a certain sensibility to defeat, nearly akin to vanity. In the manner of both the dictator prevailed, sustained in both by a majestic self-reliance, and enunciated in a language almost monarchical.

The contrast in the argumentative value and the effective success in Chatham's speeches, is explained by his vehemence of manner. Argument, as Burke confessed, and as his attempted reply to Lord Mansfield on the Wilkes case clearly demonstrates, was not his forte. There is no consecutive reasoning in his orations, no cool, judicial arrangement, no well-organized concatenation of ideas. He spoke rather a series of fine sentiments, each commensurate with the sentence that contained it, beginning with it and ending with it. Hence the number of his palpable hits. Effective as they were,

they were certainly not marks of a skilful debater. But they were to a pre-eminent degree marks of a skilful dramatist. And to enunciate them successfully required the parts of a skilful actor. This actor, Chatham, we know, was. In place of argument, he had unflinching assumption. The *ipse dixi*, the "I affirm," and the "I am ready to maintain," and "I pledge myself to prove" constituted all his logic. The reason why his orations were so devoid of elaborate ratiocination is the reason, perhaps, why they were otherwise so effective. They were entirely unpremeditated. He possessed great facility of invention, with the greatest oratorical energy, and his energy and invention seemed to be proportioned to each other, and to be mutually dependent on each other. He could not speak set speeches. His harangue on Wolfe was elaborately prepared, and all that it is notorious for is its complete failure. Though no man knew so well how to say what he pleased, we may easily believe, with Walpole, that no man ever knew so little what he was going to say. Fulfilling the law of compensation, he was in every other respect a most prodigal speaker. He certainly spoke too often and too long, and it was not without reason that the king returned him one of his speeches to be shortened. His manner was singularly wordy. He reiterated, aggravated, and repeated. Indeed, half of his strength lies in his happy trick of verbal reduplication. Such sentences as, "I was credulous; I was duped, I was deceived," "It was unjust, groundless, illiberal, unmanly," it is evident, owe their emphasis to their structure and their pleonasm. Not that Chatham was a mere sophistical rhetor. His rhetorical expressions were strong, because his convictions were strong. His vehemence was fed by his sincerity, and in turn stimulated it. His mind magnified everything. Every little abnormal phenomenon in the Con-

stitution was a source of aggravated apprehension, and it may be of an exaggerated expression of his apprehension. An impolitic peace was an omen of despair to him. "The country was sold at the late peace; it was sold by the Court of Turin to the Court of France." The expulsion of Wilkes was the ruin of the Constitution. "A breach is made in the Constitution—the battlements are dismantled, the citadel is open to the first invader, the walls totter, the place is no longer tenable; what then remains for us but to stand foremost in the breach, to repair it, or to perish in it?"

Hume asserted that, if the manner of Demosthenes could be copied, it would have an infallible success over a modern assembly. Burke thought otherwise. It is certain that the style of Demosthenes is far more genial to a parliamentary audience of our day than that of Chatham. There can be no doubt that, estimated by the influence of individual speeches, the influence of oratory has gradually been on the decline. It would be easy to show that this decline has not been owing to any failure in the character of the audience. It was once, and among a certain class of idolators it still is, the fashion, to dwell on the superior refinement of the audiences of antiquity. This, however, is a ridiculous partiality, founded on a misapprehension. The British House of Commons is the most perfect arena for the display of oratory that the most sanguine rhetorician could have imagined for himself. The most experienced statesmen that the world ever saw are among its speakers. The most refined critics are among its judges. Historians sit in it. Philosophers, profound as any Athens ever reared, and poets as sensitive as any Athenian, respond to every echo within its walls. Intellect and taste, every art and every science, has its representative there. A quick sense of propriety, the fruit of high talent and high

birth, a cultivated fastidiousness, a mental and a moral activity rarely at rest, a keen philanthropic susceptibility, all the material for the production of the most exquisite oratory, and all the material for the most exquisite appreciation of it, collect, re-act, and centre there. The truth is, it is to the political not to the ethical inflexibility of the audience that their apparent inertia and indifference are to be traced. Party has its ties which no sentimental homilies, no power of ratiocination, can break. All the pathos of Pitt could not weaken the coalition of Fox and North. Political convictions are not always arrived at by the path of reason. Those that hear are not always unprejudiced. Hence, as a conciliatory engine and for the purpose of persuasion, oratory is robbed of half its power. The Opposition laughs, weeps, applauds, but does not change its benches. The same influence, producing a similar effect, extends itself beyond the circle of the audience. It is said that a modern orator speaks to those who read rather than to those who hear him. This indeed is but the natural result of the operation of that constitutional progress which has lessened the independence of the representative on the elector. In the days of Old Sarum no representative thought of consulting the interests or dreading the alienation of his constituents. In the days when as yet reporters were not, no body of constituents could ensure the exposition of their interests by their representative. Soon after Johnson ceased to write the debates in a garret of Exeter Street, a change set in, which has not yet ceased to develop its effects, and the influence of which is gradually assimilating the style of debate in the British House of Commons to that which prevails in the American Congress. The language of the American statesman is that of an agent, or, more emphatically, of an advocate. He is not at rest till he has despatched at least one speech a

session full of flattering attention to his clients. The tone of the English orator is that of a trustee. He speaks under evident restraint. He is continually looking backward and forward ; backward to the pledges of the last hustings, forward to the prospects of the next. He talks as it were before judges to whom he is finally accountable. If he is bold enough to renounce the promises of his functional baptism, to despise the catechism to come, there is a despair in his boldness which testifies to his sense of responsibility even in the act of repudiating it. But on the reader, equally as on the hearer, the effect of a parliamentary oration is generally inadequate. The ties of the reader, though removed from the immediate sphere of contact, are equally strong. His political principles have probably been inherited with his religious principles. His attachment to the tenets of Jacobitism is probably as strong as his attachment to the articles of the Nicene Creed. Or his horror of protection is as keen as his horror of episcopacy. From his childhood he has been nourished with the milk of Toryism or the strong meat of Whiggism. The speeches that he reads, therefore, are generally uttered by the oracles of his own party ; or, if he does lend an ear to his opponents, it is not for conviction sake, when conviction would involve the shame of heresy, and the surrender of hereditary associations, as dear in his sight as the quarterings of his family escutcheon.

But though the influence of rhetoric in the House of Commons is clearly not such as was enunciated by the great orators of antiquity, teleologically speaking, the modern orator is not without his influence. The difference is, his influence is exemplified slowly and by degrees. He wins in the long run. A single success, an isolated triumph of eloquence, may give him a momentary reputation. Every one who has ever heard

of Single-speech Hamilton knows that it does not give him power. It is in the aggregate, by reiteration, by accumulation, that he prevails. Under such terms, though his language may be unstudied, though he may never have looked into the Parliamentary Logic, the faculty of speech is power. In the English Constitution it is political power; it is statesmanship. No recommendation can supply the absence of its prestige. Splendid abilities, the utmost literary renown, are without it insufficient testimonies. Dissociated from it, the historian of the Roman Empire lingers below the gangway. Assisted by it, a cornet of horse becomes the arbiter of Europe.

The elder Pitt was an orator by nature. He was not taught and schooled into declamatory perfection. His knowledge was very confined. His knowledge of the English language, indeed, was derived from a fountain pure and undefiled—the poems of Spenser and the sermons of Barrow. The younger Pitt, on the other hand, was an orator by discipline and by inheritance. He was early a thorough master of the Greek and Latin tongues. He was therefore a thorough master of all those great oratorical achievements whose fame shall survive when the Greek and Latin tongues shall be undecipherable. They formed, we are told, his favourite study. He translated them, retranslated them, analysed and got them by heart. Early associations tended to strengthen and confirm the effects of physical heritage and educational training. It could not have well been otherwise with Chatham's son. The fame of that great man had penetrated into the nursery of Hayes. Of the eldest son's appreciation we know nothing. The eldest son was no genius. But biography still loves to linger on the strangely precocious interest which the second son took in his father's renown. Before other boys left school, he was holding mock debates at a London tavern,

and astonishing men who lived to hear his great parliamentary triumphs, and to repeat that his great parliamentary triumphs did not surpass the tentative effusions of the amateur. Long before he scandalized the Doctors of Golgotha by presuming to set up for Cambridge, his form was familiar to the starers of the House of Commons. Day by day the young athlete was to be seen in the gallery, exercising his memory, and practising his discrimination by hearing and answering in his own mind the great geniuses of debate. It was no wonder, when he entered the arena in earnest, the general cry was that a champion had taken the field. His first triumph came with his first speech. A hundred eyes strove to trace in the features and the manner of the young orator the old familiar lineaments of the sire who slept in Westminster. A hundred memories recalled the tones which had more than once roused the chivalry of England to action. "It is not a chip of the old block," said Burke, enthusiastically, "it is the old block himself."

Pitt soon displayed qualities the very opposite to those of his rival, Fox. He was shy and formal. His manners were stiff and reserved. A great deal was due to the circumstances under which he entered life. He had passed from college to the cabinet, and he brought to the cabinet something of that self-complacency and formality which, somehow or other, is always contracted by certain natures in the precincts of the college. Even in his most relaxed moments his most indulgent companions were nettled to find in the friend, as in the minister, that academical starchiness and that academical affectation which dons and tutors love to see in their undergraduates. Among his enemies, or, properly speaking, among his opponents, it operated to his disadvantage. Men who were accustomed to the genial familiarity and hearty good-fellowship of Fox, mistook his

shyness for cunning, and denounced his formality as hauteur. He was, they said, the man of ancient Carthage. He was the man of modern Italy. He was anything but an Englishman.¹ Both the eloquence and the lives of the two statesmen present a very marked contrast. Pitt was cold and artificial. In his oratory, as in his demeanour, everything bespoke a temperament well under command. There are no sallies of passion, no vehement apostrophes. When he attempted to be earnest, he generally ended in being dignified. When he attempted to be warm, his warmth never exceeded the bounds of the most careful good breeding. His simplicity was studied. His energy was an educated one. Hamilton said that his eloquence appeared to him "languid elegance;" Fox's, "spirited vulgarity." Flood thought that neither merited the title of eloquent speakers. Pitt's he calls "didactic declamation;" Fox's, "argumentative conversation." Acute observers thought Pitt many leagues behind Fox, though it was acknowledged that Pitt had, what Fox had not, dignity of manner which is the form, and dignity of character which is the art, of oratory.²

His style, like the style of Fox, verbose, but verbose rather by redundancy than by repetition, without pomp, with few flowers of rhetoric and few images, was exactly the style to suit the nature of the man, well regulated, firm, and reasonable. It was by the aid of this style, I suspect, that he was enabled to excel in two very distinct and even opposite qualifications, in the art of amplification and the art of suppression. When he would be explicit, he unfolded his statements with perfect lucidness and distinctness. When

¹ Godwin.

² Nichol's "Illustrations." Letters of Hardinge to Horace Walpole, vol. iii. p. 212.

he wished to be reserved, he did not suppress his language, indeed, but he concealed his meaning under the semblance of candour, and gratified the curiosity of his hearers under the semblance of satisfying it. He certainly had not the commanding brilliancy of his father, but his language was more correct, and his reasoning more methodical. It is denied that he is argumentative. There is no doubt Fox, in the gross, is superior to him in the art of reply. But in Pitt it was not so much inability as disinclination. His measured style was not accommodated to the colloquial manner of Fox. But that he could be argumentative, could take his opponent's objections, arrange them in formal order, and reply to them one by one with masterly succinctness, is manifest to any one who will take the pains to read his speech on the discussion of Preliminary Articles of Peace with France, Spain, and Austria, February 21, 1783 ; his speech on the abolition of slavery, April 2, 1792 ; and his speech on Fox's resolution about the pacification with France, May 30, 1794. He indulged in none of the fanciful imagery of Burke, and evidently thought it unsuited to the business of debate. One of his bitterest and happiest castigations was extorted by the imaginative exuberance of Burke's speech on the King's address, December 6, 1782, and may be found in his own speech in reply. Sheridan's gay and lively manner was peculiarly distasteful to him. He had chastised Burke. He took occasion to offer a dignified rebuke to Sheridan. The theatre, he told him, was the fit place for the gay effusions of his fancy, his turns, and his epigrammatic points. Let him reserve them for the stage, and on the stage they would doubtless have the good fortune *sui plausus gaudere theatri*. The reproof was a happy one, but it is remembered, unfortunately, by the far happier counter-retort which it called up. "Flattered and

encouraged by the Right Honourable gentleman's encomiums on my talents," said the wit, "if ever I again engage them in the composition he alludes to, I may be led by an act of presumption to attempt an improvement upon one of Ben Jonson's best characters, the character of the Angry Boy in the 'Alchemist.'"

Sheridan himself was far superior to Pitt in what may be called the Comedy of Debate. Indeed, if the perfection of his oratory is to be estimated by the number of its several accomplishments, he might be pronounced superior to Pitt in the gross. No single rhetorical beauty is in one place or another absent from it. The ridiculous, the pathetic, and the sublime, each reached a climax in him. Yet Sheridan's reputation never was and never can be placed on a level with Pitt's. The truth is, he resembled an ancient Pentathlete. Skilled in all the five exercises, he was superior in all to mere amateurs, but inferior in each to professionals. His information was limited. His classical learning was below his general information. The powers of his mind were extensive, but they exceeded its acquisitions. He was accused of displaying too much wit. Yet those who knew him have since declared that no one came at their wit more laboriously. Whole mornings were secretly dedicated to it, apparently surrendered to the lazy sleep of fashion; and the happy epigram or lively repartee of to-day was probably manufactured a week, or even a month, before its delivery. Some one has mentioned him in the same breath with the Grecian Hyperides. And perhaps it would be difficult to give his characteristics in fitter words than those applied to Hyperides by Longinus: "There is an exhaustless fund of wit about him, a vein of piquant satire, a natural grace, a skilfulness of irony, jests not clumsy or loose, after the manner of the old Attic writers, but

natural and easy ; a ready talent for ridicule, a deal of comic point, conveyed in a style of well-managed pleasantry, and in all things a winning gracefulness that is almost inimitable. It is plain, too, that he has composed some of his discourses in a style more like poetry than prose." " Sheridan's," said Burke, as if in imitation of Longinus, " is a middle style between prose and poetry."

In every way dissimilar to Pitt was his great antagonist, Fox. Pitt was studious and abstemious. Fox loved dissipation, and hated application. Pitt was ambitious, and was industrious to realize his ambition. Fox was ambitious, but it was the passion he took least pains in gratifying. He loved popularity, yet he did little to win it, and was perpetually doing much to risk it. He disguised no vice, though a little disguise might have saved him much obloquy. Void of design, and impatient of culture, his parts were natural, and his success due only to his parts. As a statesman, in private virtues he was of the race of the Whartons and Rochesters, and the last of his race. Since his time no minister has left behind him such details of extravagance and dissoluteness. That he was the best-natured man alive must be placed, however, as a balance in his favour. Men who hated him as a politician could not deny their heart to the man. As a politician, too, it was difficult to hate him. All that generosity and good-humour which fascinated in his private life and among his private associates, clung to him in politics. He had no spleen. He bore no ill-will ; none that an evening with " Don Quixote " and Mrs. Armistead could not remove. It was emphatically true of him that the sun did not go down on his wrath. In the hearty enthusiasm of a moment of admiration he would more than once have carried off Pitt to Brookes'. When the philosophic labours of a lifetime had jangled

the fine-strung sensibilities of Burke, the statesman wept, while the philosopher pouted. Outside the House his popularity, though sometimes endangered, was scarcely less. His vices, I suspect, operated upon his character among his cotemporaries as did those of his ancestor Charles II. They were vices of the heart rather than of the head, originating in indolence rather than in malignancy. Hence his friends pardoned the man they had not the courage to condemn. They overlooked the rake in the statesman; and while he disgraced the metropolis with scenes as vicious as any that were ever enacted on Tower Hill or at Bartholomew Fair, they still clung to the champion, in whom they realized the cause that had bled with Hampden on the field, and with Sidney on the scaffold. They never found him wanting. His exertions were quite commensurate with his idleness. His activity equalled his sloth. If he gave his nights to champagne and ombre, he gave his days to the serfs of Africa and the Helots of America. He was not a successful man. His fondness for play was scarcely surpassed by his fondness for politics. Yet in play he ended as a beggar, and for his success in politics, it is enough to say that, with the exception of eleven months, he was never out of opposition. His passion for women equalled his passion for play. Yet those who enjoyed his confidence, and lived to review in charity the wild acts of a not very malignant nature, declared that he never formed a connection with a woman that was not unlucky to him.

If the exhibition of emotion be the test of sincerity, and the exhibition of sincerity the test of a great orator, Fox was one of the greatest orators that ever lived. The hurried sentence, the involuntary exclamation, the vehement gesture, the start, the agitation, everything was indicative of that kind of eloquence that comes

from the heart, and goes to the heart. His tongue faltered, his voice grew stifled, and his face bathed with tears. Pitt lost by the contrast in his demeanour. Those who watched the motions of his great rival saw in the stiff, unbending figure the monotonous inflection, and the solemn posture, the formal grace of a passionless automaton. They matched the earnestness, the animation, the enthusiasm of the one, against the gravity, the smoothness, and the plausibility of the other, and they denied that there could be warmth where there was so little fire.

In taking into consideration, however, the superiority of Fox in this respect, it must be remembered that his oratory was cradled and nursed in opposition. The effect of such a position on parliamentary oratory is by no means slight. His independence of situation imparts to the speaker an independence of tone. No official reserve is there to chill his animation or to curb his tongue. Horace Walpole has remarked, in one of his Memoirs, that Marchmont in opposition and Marchmont in place were two very different speakers. The warmth and fire of his elocution when out of office disappeared, and left him without a single redeeming grace in office. Something of the same test must be applied in a comparison of Fox with Pitt. In logic, in all the formalities of eloquence, in all those points, in fact, where his nature and habits would suggest an inferiority, he was inferior to Pitt. In the latter there is a faultless regularity of thought, accompanied by a technical arrangement of diction, that is never violated. Fox, though choice in expression, is loose in arrangement. His declamation flowed from him in a torrent. But though his words escaped from him, rather than were uttered, they were the vehicle of close, and sometimes of subtle argument. There has been some reaction

against Sir James Mackintosh's verdict, that he was the most Demosthenian speaker since Demosthenes.¹ The truth is, easy as it seems, nothing is more really difficult than to discriminate between speakers, except it be to find words which shall give the results of discrimination an exact equational expression. Any one who will read

¹ I should have dwelt with greater emphasis on this reaction, had I discovered that any other than Lord Brougham was the chief promoter of it. Lord Brougham is a man who has other claims than those of an intellectual old age, to veneration. His has been one of the hardest working minds of his generation. His position is not without interest. He lives in the present, but his great triumphs are situated in the past. He has acted history, and he has survived to hear the comments of history on the part he has acted. But though thus connecting two generations, as it were, in his own person, it cannot be said of Lord Brougham that he was ever the leader of either of them. He is rather a remarkable instance of the great success which a supple mind sometimes achieves by labouring like a slave for the age—by pursuing, rather than foreseeing its wants; and by diligently co-operating with its efforts, rather than by dexterously anticipating them. He has not been, at any time of his life, ahead of his generation. But though he has not been a pioneer, he has always been among the foremost in the van. He has exhibited in this, great ductility, rather than great originality. He has been led, but he has followed at an almost imperceptible interval. Those who have read his letter to Lord Lansdowne on the French Revolution of 1848, will readily appreciate my meaning. Such, I believe, will be the praise awarded by posterity to Lord Brougham. Criticism is approaching a sentimental stage with regard to him. Grey hairs are seductive at all times. When set off by undiminished activity of intellect, the unusual combination of bodily weakness and mental vigour invites the perilous interference of an unusual sympathy. The audience and the actor are connected, also, by too many ties. The tones of his voice are still ringing in their ears. Their plaudits have not ceased to welcome the ardour of his gesticulation. They are judging Roscius before he has quitted the boards.

His literary productions impartial criticism will, I think, approach with a different feeling. They have not the elements of immortality in them. They partake of the character of his general existence. A busy, hurried, clever tone pervades them, interrupted by periods of brilliancy, but exhibiting more effect than either profundity or originality. The work in which he impugns Sir James Mackintosh's judgment—the "Essays on Statesmen"—is, considering the popularity it has enjoyed, one of the most superficial works ever written on such a topic. Its sketchy, linear treatment is miserably out of all proportion to the subject. Its inconsistencies, contradictions, vague declamatoriness, are not the least among its deficiencies. If we except the showy diction, and the fastidiously elaborated eloquence, it is only justice to say that so grand a topic has rarely met with a treatment so inadequately commonplace.

Hume's eloquent delineation of Demosthenes will see at a glance that it can properly be applied to no other English orator than Fox. The chief point in which Fox differs from Demosthenes is the inartificial arrangement of his language. But the difference lies in the amount of application, not in the effect produced. For the purposes of oratory, the language of both is as successfully disposed as it could be. There are most certainly some very singular parallels of excellences in their speeches. I have noted down many, but one example in particular of Fox is so Demosthenian, that I cannot refrain from giving it. It occurs in the speech on American affairs, on the opening of the session for November, 1781. And it is curious that, in this speech, the orator quotes and applies to the situation of this country a famous address of Demosthenes to his countrymen:—"There was one circumstance in the conduct and the language of Ministers he could not help taking notice of. It was that, amidst all their sorrow for the loss of Earl Cornwallis and his brave army, there seemed one thing which gave them great consolation, and for which they were grateful. It was, that our fleet had not ventured to fight the enemy. Hear it," exclaimed the orator; "hear it, Mr. Speaker; it is a source of joy new in the history of Great Britain, that we rejoice on the occasion of one of our fleets not venturing to engage and fight the enemy. To even this are we reduced." I almost fear to venture on my own translation of the famous rebuke in the first Philippic, which every scholar has doubtless anticipated in his own mind before I quote it:—"Do ye prefer walking about and asking one another, Is there any news? What! tell me, can there be greater news than that a man of Macedonia is subduing Athenians, and administering Greece?" The whole of Fox's speech is most Demo-

sthenian. The imaginary dialogue between the King of France and his subjects, the indignant outburst that followed on the sneer of Dundas, are rather copies than parallels.

Superior to Fox, superior to Pitt, was Burke. Any disadvantages, on the part of Fox, in natural abilities, were increased by the character of his personal pursuits. Burke maintained through life that habit of study that Pitt had in his youth, and he added to his powers of accumulation what Pitt had not, a large and philosophical scrutiny. While Fox was making up his losses at Newmarket, or drinking out the night at Hockrel, the author of the "Treatise on the Sublime" was pushing into the recondite realms of every science a rare and unwearied spirit of investigation. He boasted, and boasted truly, that he had none of that master-vice, sloth, in his composition. Man of genius though he was, he possessed in a remarkable degree the industry of a vulgar plodder. Nor was his industry a fastidious one. Nothing was too high or too low for it. It comprehended everything, from the most elaborate act of imperial legislation to the discussion of a Dutch or Italian master with Reynolds or Barry, or parsnips and Indian corn with Arthur Young. In spite of these qualifications, however, Burke has always struck me as a memorable instance of more than adequate means of commanding success, resulting in a very inadequate share of it. He was the greatest political philosopher of his day, yet he commanded no adherents. He was the greatest orator, yet he commanded no converts, and could scarce command an audience. He was the best-informed man in Parliament. He certainly was most exact and most ready in his information. His mind was well stocked with every sort of intellectual merchandize. Every article was in its place, prepared at a moment's notice

for exhibition to the casual customer. Added to this, he had the means of pleasing as well as convincing. His language was choice and classical, and copiously various. Imagery the most bountiful and the most beautiful set off his homeliest wares. They were packed in a style of sentence which, if it had any fault, had the fault of an excess of harmony. He was, too, one of the wittiest men even in that regal period of wit. Yet he was tiresome, his name passed into a parliamentary proverb, and the signal for his rising to speak was the signal for his audience to quit their benches.

The cause of Burke's inadequate moral supremacy lies, I think, in the composition of his character. He was a man of no compromise. "I have ever liked," he writes to the Marquis of Rockingham, "I have ever liked a decided situation of friendship or amity." His attachments were strong, and his antipathies were strong, while to both his impetuous temper imparted an air of earnestness almost approaching to passion. Calculating politicians could not understand it. They could not understand that a man should give himself and his friends so much vexation for nothing; and they put down his eagerness to interest, and his anxiety to ambition. He was naturally sensitive, and strangely enough, as he grew older, he seemed to grow more warm, more sensitive, and more passionate. The chills of age did not damp his ardour. His intellect supplied fuel to his sensations; his sensations inflamed his intellect. The tender enthusiasm of his old age was probably intensified by the events of his previous life. He had lived in a strange and a wild time. He mistook the renovation of society for its dissolution. The agonies attending the birth of Liberty sounded in his ears as the agonies of its death. Ere his public life had begun, symptoms of the great insurrection of the

human mind had set in. Ere he had been laid in his grave at Beaconsfield, the great drama had been played out. On the heights of Boston, on the banks of the Hudson, on the banks of the Seine, he had watched it scene by scene, act after act, to the final consummation of the great closing catastrophe. Nor had he been an unconcerned spectator. Nay, each successive change, each new phase, struck a corresponding chord in his bosom. The great drama had opened in the guise of rational freedom, and he gave it his confidence. It promised to end in the triumph of anarchy, and he sacrificed to it his despair. It began in order, and he applauded. It ended in confusion, and he denounced.

Burke had in reality all that nervous anxiety and that exaggerated apprehensiveness, which Chatham assumed. Chatham was always thundering at the destroyers of his country, and predicting its present destruction. In Burke's irritable soul, this was a real, not a fictitious fear. His letters and speeches are full of the notes of earnest despair. Never indeed has despair chanted dirges so sweet and so solemn. In Lord George Gordon's riots, as in the American Revolution, it was "Fuimus," "Fuimus." "We were undone." "We were a doomed nation." "We were no longer a nation." On the French Revolution the cry became more earnest as the evil appeared more extensive. He had foreseen the destruction of freedom in England. His prophetic vision, guided by the terrors of an overwrought imagination, now recognized the decay of freedom in Europe. Such a disposition could never have been sustained without a warm and philanthropic heart. His philanthropy accordingly was universal. He had an instinctive horror, political and moral, of all oppression, national and individual. His large sympathies were extended to every climate and every grade, from the

Catholic who groaned beneath penal disabilities amid the bogs of Tipperary, to the African who rotted in the slave factories of Guinea; from the king who was martyred in the gaze of his European capital, to the princes whom European rapacity plundered in the city of the Jumna. When he died, it is said that his heart was found enlarged to an unusual size. It would be a pleasing fiction to believe, with the Arabian physiologist, that the physical organism is in death not unfrequently commensurate with the moral capacities of life.

As was the success of the politician, so was the success of the orator. In both positions excess rather than deficiency was the cause of his failure. As a politician he had too much mind and too much sensibility. As an orator he combined too much reason with too much imagination. As an orator he was too much of the poet and too much of the philosopher. As a politician he was too much of the student with too much of the partisan. He abhorred the application of abstract terms to politics, yet no man clothed politics in a more abstract metaphysical dress. His first speech, said a critic of the day, struck the House as a new kind of political philosophy. It was soon found that, new or old, the House was not the place for its successful exposition. All is not parliamentary that is philosophical. His eloquence was not calculated for that meridian. It would have shone eminently in a discussion society, or in an essay, and indeed his speeches read more like essays than orations. He spoke from the study, and it certainly needed the retirement of the study to appreciate what he spoke. In an assembly where immediate apprehension is necessary, there is no time for the slow process of contemplation. Hence the effect became totally inadequate to the cause. It was all appeal to the intellect, and no appeal to the passions. His subtlety for-

tified his observations, but it weakened the impressions on the audience. What they could not comprehend, they called futile. Burke wanted in this what he wanted in his political conduct generally, address, insinuation, management, self-control. His imagination ran away with him just as his temper ran away with him. It was not his fault that he did not try to evade the substantial merits of a question by treating it in some merely temporal or local consideration. But he dealt too abundantly, too generously in establishing general positions. Some of his speeches resemble tracts on purely speculative doctrines. Yet, after all, his arguments were not as shrewd as Fox's. The predominance of his imagination may be traced in his early pursuits and tastes. At one time it seemed to threaten his career. There was danger, in the opinion of some of his friends, that he was lapsing into the idleness of a poet, at the expense of severer studies. "Poetry," he writes to his friend Shackleton, "nothing but poetry could go down with me. I am entirely absorbed in the *furor poeticus*." This accounts for the profusion of metaphor broadcast over his writings, especially over his later writings. The redundancy of images is far more prodigal in his "Letters on a Regicide Peace," for example, composed when he was considerably over sixty, than in his "Essay on the Sublime," the work of his comparative youth.

It is singular, and at the same time it is suggestive of his natural gifts, that his premeditated speeches should be far more chaste and sobered than his unpremeditated. While other men require leisure to stimulate and excite their imagination, he required leisure to tame and curtail his. His famous speech on the proposed repeal of the tea duty, though extemporized, and delivered on the spur of the moment, was always considered by the best judges among its audience, as containing wonderful power of

rationation indeed, but an almost criminal excess of luxuriant imagery. It needed the art of touching the passions. Its hearers, neither persuaded nor deprecated, simply wondered and smiled. It was not the moment, it was said, for Cicero to be as playful and fanciful as Ovid. It is recorded among the miracles of Mahomet that the Prophet enabled his followers for days, not only to subsist, but to grow fat on the sticks and stones of the desert. Burke's imagination was gifted with similar faculties of assimilation. His mental powers of attrition extracted the most sustaining nutriment from the driest rhetorical materials. His imagination, in fact, like his reason, was not an aristocratic one. It adapted itself easily to all subjects. It did not despise the day of small things. It took under its protection the grandest and the meanest topics, the fate of an hemisphere, or the state of the king's kitchen; and whatever it illustrated, it illustrated successfully. It occupied itself with the dungeon of a captive queen, and it threw around the horrid tragedy a tenderness and a grace that robbed it of half its repulsiveness. It entered the royal buttery, and in an instant the dry details of purveyorships, cooks, and turnspits are worked up into a scene that might have drawn tears of theatrical envy from Sheridan. The Welsh *r  venue* adventures of Baron North and his knight Probert, in the same speech, the speech for economical reform, interests for all the world like a medi  val tale of chivalry. Even at this distance of time, and upon a hundredth perusal, it must be owned that there never was a more playful or amusing way of getting rid of such dry and repulsive details. The power of combining grave and gay, wit and pathos, was in truth one of that remarkable man's most remarkable faculties. In a speech he delivered the early part of the year 1778, the first part made Lord North convulsed

with laughter. The latter portion, it was noticed, drew iron tears down the cheek of the veteran Barré.

Such was Burke ; or, rather, such is a very faint outline of what Burke was, philosopher, moralist, metaphysician. There is a tendency just now to regard his virtues with suspicion, and his failings with harshness. His frame and his intellect so reacted upon one another, that a close and earnest psychological study alone can adequately hope to decide upon his merits. The great crisis in which he lived had a curious effect on more than one contemporary mind. It has given an air of inconsistency, even of obliquity, to more than one otherwise straightforward career. Statesmen and philosophers, the great shock has thrown several from the perpendicular, and reversed the motion of their public walk. Beginning with progress, with their faces set in the right direction, they remain, like Lot's wife, eloquent monuments of the danger of looking back.

Into the career of these historical monitors, or, what is more germane to the subject, into the merits of their oratory, it is not my intention at present to enter. The history of oratory is indeed not a topic to be exhausted in the limits of an ephemeral essay. My own skeleton outline of it has been offered rather by way of suggestion than as example. Criticism is partial. It has invaded every department of literature but this ; though it is quite certain that no other department of literature is more attractive, or is likely to be more remunerative of toil. The best treatment which ancient oratory has encountered is undoubtedly to be met with in the treatise of Cicero on " *Illustrious Orators*." Aristotle is too much of the philosopher. Dionysius is too much of the grammarian and logophilist. Quintilian is too much of the professional rhetor. Longinus has hardly any pretension. His book on the *Sublime* is certainly not a book

of philosophic criticism. Instead of being called a "Treatise on the Sublime," it should have been called a "Treatise on the Sublimities of certain Authors." It is rather a collection of examples, than an analysis of principles. He is rather the historian of the sublime than its critic. Cicero, and Cicero only, can be held up as a model, both in doctrine and in practice, to modern industry. The critic and the historian are well balanced in him. His book is written, too, in excellent taste and in an excellent spirit, rather unusual for him, of considerable impartiality and great modesty. The only questionable part about it is the form. Dialogue is a precarious plan, and enjoys but a fickle popularity. It was far more suited to ancient than it is to modern feelings. The imaginary dialogues of modern times are not always dialogues of the imagination. They are, generally speaking, void of all character and personality; and the language, instead of being diversified, is more tediously monotonous than unpretending narrative. It may be as well for the enterprising spirit that would indulge in this particular form to pause and remember that Lord Lyttleton's "Dialogues of the Dead," once so celebrated, are now only known to the facetious memory of the antiquarian critic as Dead Dialogues.

THE END.

